DÆDALUS

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THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

THE FUTURE OF OPERA

Pierre Boulez
John Cox
Matthew Epstein
Erich Leinsdorf
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The Future of Opera

Fall 1986

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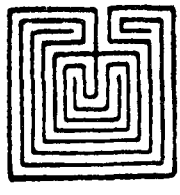

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Preface to the Issue, "The Future of Opera"

A READER, COMING UPON AN ISSUE OF *DAEDALUS*, entitled "The Future of Opera," may legitimately interpret it as an invitation to join the game of prophecy, to hear what others, with substantial interests in opera, believe may happen to that art form between now and the year 2000, or at some later date in the twenty-first century. Such, in fact, is not the purpose of this volume at all. Rather, it is informed by a somewhat more modest concern, one admirably expressed by Pierre Boulez in his collected writings, *Orientations,* translated into English, and published in both Great Britain and the United States in 1986. Boulez, in an essay entitled "Where are We Now?" suggests that there is an urgent need to ask where music is going today. In his customary style, pithy and vigorous, he writes: "I am not trying to determine the future, because the future can never be determined and would-be prophets are bores, because they deprive themselves of the privilege of innovation and adventure." Boulez, believing that no great discoveries are about to be made, that "things have settled down to a certain extent," that "we have reached a point at which we need to reflect a little—composers, that is, as well as listeners—in order to go forward," outlines an agenda of the issues that ought to engage interest and provoke argument. So, in a very real sense, should the dialogues, interviews, and observations published in this issue of *Daedalus.* They suggest something of the controversy that surrounds opera today, that goes beyond a simple inquiry into why certain houses, with great traditions and reputations, are struggling to maintain these, while others, without equivalent advantages, appear to be making great strides. On even that parochial issue, as will be obvious, there is little agreement.

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This issue of *Daedalus,* then, is concerned with a major art form—opera—how it is faring, what its prospects may be, given its current popularity. For those able to see opera regularly in live performance, watch it on television or video discs, listen to it on radio or phonograph records, for vast audiences who recognize instantly the names of Domingo and Pavarotti as earlier generations knew the names of Caruso and Melba, opera is a familiar art form, an almost daily entertainment. How opera relates to other of the arts, why it takes the forms that it does today, how, indeed, it expresses the cultural values of our time, whether it does so faithfully or very partially, are only a few of the questions suggested by a volume concerned with aesthetic and artistic issues, but also with others that are social, political, and economic. The patronage system that sustains opera, whether public or private, matters enormously; so, also, do the economic constraints that may make it reasonable to construct a vast "stadium" for opera when a smaller house would be more appropriate for the human voice, for song rendered without artificial amplification. Major issues, that have to do with the rivalries between those who wish to see many more contemporary works offered, insisting on the need to sustain living composers, to give their works a hearing—and not only in one or two performances—and those who worry that the traditional repertoire is being sacrificed to producers and set designers who aspire to appear modern, failing to see the advantages of sustaining certain traditional kinds of excellence, are only elements in a larger debate about audiences, and what they care to hear and see, how their taste is shaped, who is responsible for helping to form it.

A few brief notes on the origins of this issue. It all began with a conference in Venice, in the summer of 1985, when a newly organized foundation, the Wheatland Foundation, under the leadership of Ann Getty and George Weidenfeld, summoned a small company of singers, composers, producers, directors, designers, critics, and patrons of opera to meet to discuss its future. The greatest number of those attending came from the United Kingdom and the United States, though there were participants also from Sweden and Finland, Austria and Switzerland, Germany and, of course, Italy. The discussions continued for four days; characterized by remarkable candor and goodwill, there was no interest in muting differences or in concealing disagreements. The differences were not essentially gener-

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ational, nor, in any significant sense, national. Opera, because of its international character, allows artists to cross national and cultural boundaries easily; there is a remarkable knowledge of what is going on everywhere, not only in the so-called major houses, but in many that are relatively new, still seeking to make their way. International festivals provide an additional occasion for operatic artists from many countries to meet, to learn what others are doing.

The Venice discussions ranged over a wide variety of subjects: whether there is a shortage of good singers today, of the quality known in an earlier period; whether the lack, if it is real, is accentuated by the fact that opera singers are too often required to perform in great halls, theaters unsuited to the human voice; whether an older style of conducting, and of conductors, interested in the whole performance, prepared to coach and care for singers—indeed train them—has largely disappeared; whether opera companies, in certain countries, amply supported by public funds, are producing more original work and more accomplished performances than those who enjoy smaller subsidies, or none at all, being virtually dependent on private patronage; whether television is massively transforming opera, and whether its effects are largely good or bad; whether new techniques in production, lighting, set design, and the like, are creating wholly new renditions of traditional works, and what the quality of these works is; whether the use of surtitles in opera, now common in certain houses, is desirable, and what its effects are on audiences. Indeed, questions about the nature of the audience for opera, the kinds of familiarity an audience needs to have to enjoy opera, how contemporary works fare, whether new opera composition is sufficiently funded and encouraged, the liveliness of contemporary opera criticism, the uses of new technology to serve opera, the importance of international festivals in perpetuating specific operatic traditions, and the role of entrepreneurship in causing particular houses to prosper, were all reflected on.

A conference that went on for four days, fully transcribed, could not be entirely duplicated in a single *Daedalus* issue. In any case, such a transcript would not have rendered the quality of the discussion that occurred away from the conference table. A decision was made to edit the conference transcript, offer some parts of it, and supplement that material with additional observations, gained from interviews and the like, that might help to illuminate the conditions that

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exist today in specific places. Because the circumstances that touch opera, that affect its vitality and artistic excellence, are so various, differing between countries and cities, because taste and training are important, because politics and patronage so constantly intrude, though often in covert forms, it is difficult to explore in a single *Daedalus* issue the whole range of operatic performance in the world today.

Our experience with this issue has told us that there are numerous stories that wait to be told, that cry out for interpretation. How has German opera managed to restore itself, following on the devastations of the Second World War, and why have there not been equal successes in that other great continental home of opera, Italy? What significance ought to be attached to the excitement created by recent operatic performances at Bremen, so different from the more "routine" repertoire of certain other German houses, all generously endowed and admirably subsidized? What explanation is to be given for the new successes of the opera at Brussels, which now regularly attracts audiences from Paris, who travel up by luxurious train in the late afternoon, attend the Brussels Opera performance, and return to Paris that same evening? Why have the Welsh National Opera and the Scottish Opera become so vital? Why does English National Opera North, in Leeds, now merit a detour for all who are interested in what is new in the operatic world today? Why does the Australian Opera, in Sydney, decades after the building of its magnificent house in the incomparable setting of Sydney harbor, still win great international acclaim, while its performances in Melbourne, deservedly popular, are much less noted? Why, indeed, is the Victoria State Opera, in Melbourne, with its experimental offerings, not given the international attention it deserves? One could go on to pose any number of such questions; these are mentioned only to suggest how vital opera has become over great parts of the world, why it is no longer possible to concentrate all attention on a few countries, with a handful of great houses and companies.

Because the discussions in Venice were general and never intended to dwell on the specific circumstances of opera in any one country, it seemed important to supplement that dialogue with another that concentrated on the operatic situation in two cities. We decided, for a number of reasons, to dwell on New York and Paris. Because it is impossible for a city's experience to be divorced from a context that

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is international, that does not take into account the repertoire common in great opera houses today, we invited Erich Leinsdorf to consider that question: why, of the thousands of operas written, do only a relatively small number gain and retain prominence? Why, indeed, is the late twentieth-century opera repertoire what it is? How has it changed over time? This theme relates intimately to others that figure in the volume: why there is so much resistance to the performance of contemporary opera; whether that resistance is exaggerated; if it is explicable by the unfamiliarity of audiences with contemporary music and its novel structures. The two concluding paragraphs of Leinsdorf's essay convey a certain part of his message; he writes:

> International survival of any operatic work, regardless of its standard and rating by experts, depends most on the quality of its memorable moments. The total composition is of concern only to the professionals and others who are musically initiated. The importance of the libretto, however, has declined over generations of spectators who no longer find it compelling to participate emotionally in Rigoletto's grief or in Cio-Cio-San's tragedy.
>
> Modern stage directors indulge in philosophical, cultural, sociological, and political prefaces, statements, and interviews to explain what Mozart, Wagner, or Puccini "meant"; all these *obiter dicta*—if taken seriously—aim to reinvolve a public that has lost the identification and compassion indispensable to opera if it is to be the total experience it was intended to be. There are many sublime scores, and many attractive scores, which, given the right treatment, would bring the public back into the environment out of which each of these works emerged.

In our effort to render something of the quality of opera in New York at this time, we interviewed individuals whose perspectives and experience are widely divergent. In each instance, we invited commentators to take a broad view of their subject, to treat it in a context that is not simply local. Our interest has not been to praise or condemn any house, to honor one company at the expense of another. Rather, we have tried to provoke comment that would explain why the New York opera scene is as it is, how it has changed, and why it may change even more dramatically in the years to come.

Our first interview, with Matthew Epstein, is provocative for many reasons, not least for what it says of the opera criticism that regularly appears in *The New York Times*. The power of that single newspaper

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in making or breaking an opera, in persuading its public that a particular production has or lacks merit, that a conductor, singer, set designer, or producer deserves to be praised or must learn to live with the back of the "old lady's hand" is remarkable. While Epstein refrains from contrasting the American opera reviewing situation with others that exist in the United Kingdom, for example, where many more than half a dozen daily and Sunday newspapers regularly review opera on a national basis, where it is inconceivable that a single review could make or break a reputation, it is clear that he finds *The New York Times*' "monopoly" disconcerting—all the more so because New York, while no longer incontestably the center of opera in America, at least in the opinion of some, retains all of its very considerable influence. Indeed, if that influence were not as great as it is, *The New York Times* would not appear on every opera-house director's desk in the world, guiding decisions on which singers to invite, which operas to produce.

For a system that depends so heavily on private patronage, individual and corporate, the decisions made by a handful of large donors can be absolutely crucial. Epstein reflects on why certain operas are looked upon favorably and why it is difficult to win support for experimental or innovative opera, why New York, with its remarkable receptiveness to foreign example, is still so retrograde in the techniques it uses, in the kinds of productions it is prepared to stage. In many operatic spheres, New York lags far behind certain European cities. This is not to suggest that American-born and American-trained singers, resourceful and talented, are not in great demand everywhere today. The "export" of such singers is in fact very considerable. The question, however, is why America—and not only New York—is not exporting also new American operas, accomplished American producers, committed to new works, imaginatively staged, impeccably sung, intelligently produced. When one considers that New York, like much of America, is today "awash in money"—a phrase not used in the interview, incidentally—one must ask why individual patrons are not proving to be even more generous, why corporations seem unwilling to risk major support of unconventional works.

Because governmental support of opera, on the federal and state level, remains severely restricted in this country, certainly in comparison with Europe, but also because such public support has been

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growing significantly in recent years, it seemed important to hear from someone who has held an influential arts post in the Empire State, and has been in a position to help opera. Kitty Carlisle Hart, chairman of the New York State Council on the Arts, agreed to make observations on her own work, but also on what she feels has been happening to American opera more generally. Acquainted with opera in several of the great cities of the country, and knowing also what certain of the major festivals have contributed, her chief interest has been to tell a story that is not much known. In many of the smaller cities, like Binghamton, New York, opera companies now exist that were unknown just a few decades ago. In addition to offering high-level live performances to audiences that come from areas previously little served, these companies provide invaluable experience for young operatic talent. Though few are repertory companies, in the traditional sense, and most offer only a limited number of productions in relatively short seasons, they serve a function of the greatest importance: they make opera a real presence in many communities.

Kitty Carlisle Hart, surveying the New York State opera scene with a wide-angle lens, knowing that public funding now has importance for almost all companies, both large and small, is acutely aware of all that has changed since the days when she sang at the Metropolitan. While there is little nostalgia for the "good old days," there is recognition of what certain new technologies have done to change old habits, creating new opportunities and new problems. While the jet airplane is not, in Hart's view, an invention that has done much to help opera, she feels wholly differently about both television and surtitles. Both, she says, create substantial possibilities for new audiences, with increased understanding of what they are seeing and hearing. To say all this is not to underestimate the serious financial and artistic problems that opera companies confront today, that make their reliance on public and private support so essential.

Some of the same sentiments inform the observations of Harvey Lichtenstein. Having taken command almost a quarter of a century ago of a mid-nineteenth-century theater, in a section of Brooklyn devastated by urban neglect, Lichtenstein has created a musical center substantially different from any other that exists in the city of New York. While opera remains a relatively small part of the Brooklyn Academy of Music's offerings each year, its contributions have not

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been insignificant. Searching for new operatic talent, wanting always to sustain composers and producers who might otherwise have difficulty in coming to the public's attention, Lichtenstein argues that the relations between opera, theater, dance, and the fine arts are more intimate than is sometimes realized. If the Brooklyn Academy of Music is producing operas not attempted elsewhere in the city and is attracting a predominantly youthful audience, with values and interests significantly different from those of audiences in the more traditional houses, it is also creating new loyalties and new understandings of what opera in the last part of the twentieth century can be. Again, the story of these new allegiances is interesting in itself, but needs to be read also as a chapter in a continuing conflict between men and women committed to a traditional repertoire, however presented, and those determined to extend the repertoire, to include many works by living composers.

Controversy about opera in France, and in Paris particularly, is certainly no less intense than any now occurring in the English-speaking world; indeed, it may be that the French debate is even more animated, with fewer reticences. Because support for opera depends so much in France on what the state does—on how much it is prepared to appropriate in public monies—and because private patronage is virtually unknown and sale of theater seats can never compensate for a diminished public appropriation of funds, the political stakes are very high. They are battled over in a way that is almost unthinkable in the United Kingdom, wholly inconceivable in the United States. To see these struggles simply as quarrels over aesthetic values is to miss their meaning entirely; they are rooted also in fundamental ideological and political differences.

Given that Paris is today much concerned with the building of a new opera house, intended for the Place de la Bastille, to be opened coincidentally with the 200th anniversary of the outbreak of the French Revolution, disputes over the projected costs of building the house, but also about the operas that it would offer and the impact it would have on the old "bourgeois" house at the Place de l'Opéra, have all been heatedly aired. After the recent legislative elections, when the Socialists were placed in a minority and the president was compelled to call on Jacques Chirac to form a new government, the new Minister of Culture, responding to questions about the proposed opera, created a commission, headed by Olivier Chevrillon, to study

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the Bastille opera proposals. Very small segments of the Chevrillon commission report, as carried in the French press, are reproduced in this issue. They are eloquent in suggesting how the problem is viewed, why the issue has become so profoundly political, and what the building of an opera at the Bastille is likely to do to Napoleon III's creation at the Palais Garnier. The aesthetic, economic, political, and social dimensions of alternative solutions are considered; several options are offered. The report, in its official prose, somewhat attenuated by a fairly free translation, scarcely begins to reflect the heat that these quarrels have generated, and not only in musical circles.

If time constraints did not exist, a number of responses to the Chevrillon report might have been printed. As it is, we are able to print only one reaction, partial to the report, but illuminating for what at least one observer believes to be involved in the controversy that surrounds the building of the new opera house at the Bastille. Maryvonne de Saint Pulgent argues that the differences are not principally over architecture; they may not even be centered on the very large credits that would have to be voted for a new house. Believing the ideological and political issues to be profound, knowing that there is great concern with the kinds of opera that the new house would offer and whether it would not spell the end of a more traditional repertoire, she is concerned about the "hype" that has accompanied much of the propaganda for the new house. If there is indeed a need for a greater number of seats for a public avidly interested in opera, does the new house also require the kinds of twenty-first century technology that are now contemplated? What is the purpose of all this new technological "grandeur"? Is it really necessary for a so-called "popular" house, a house for the people, built in that most symbolic of all places, the Bastille?

There is enormous significance in the Paris story, with all its drama, as there is also in the New York story. Paris dominates the French operatic world in a way that New York does the American, London the British. The important thing to note, however, is that all this may now be changing. The old dominations are not collapsing, but they are certainly being challenged as never before. Given the new enthusiasm that exists for opera, the new houses being created, and the new companies founded, the old dominance of a few great houses may be coming to an end. Just as there are significant differences

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within individual cities, in London, for example, between productions of the English National Opera at the Coliseum and those of the Royal Opera at Covent Garden, so an even larger potential difference is created by the growing importance of the Welsh National Opera, the Scottish Opera, and English National Opera North. There is an opera competition today not so much for audiences as for musical originality and quality, for theatrical excellence. For the first time in many years, there is a plethora of houses and distinguished companies; they are not all doing opera in the same way. Indeed, something of the same sort can be seen to be happening in the United States, though on a different scale, and with quite other modalities of artistic innovation. Again, there are many new houses in the country, and festivals like that of Sante Fe are providing an opportunity for imaginative and novel experiment. If those who frequent the opera in New York believe that it is still the uncontested center of the American operatic universe, and if this is difficult to refute in 1986, it may not be equally so in the year 2000. The new opera in Los Angeles, not to speak of others already operating, is certainly providing competition. There appears to be a revitalization of opera out of the old artistic centers, and this is true everywhere. Even in France, where Paris once dominated, the opera at Lyons is being awarded new attention. That opera is not simply following the lead of Paris. As for Geneva and Brussels, where French operatic talent is much in evidence, new reputations are being made. Paris is still incontestably important, but not in the way that it was before the Second World War.

Opera is an international enterprise, and this becomes increasingly apparent with each passing year. Great new opportunities for international cooperation exist; we are witnessing today the first very early stages of such cooperative endeavor. More joint productions, involving many more companies, are likely in the future. Within individual countries, great interpretative differences are possible, which is not to say that opera does not also retain something of its traditional cast, even when it seems receptive to innovation. In the United States, there is an urgent need for more telling opera criticism, a greater willingness to experiment, to support new composition, new production. However, such innovation is not automatically guaranteed a sympathetic or respectful hearing. If large audiences continue to enjoy nineteenth-century opera performed in a somewhat

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traditional manner, and if they find twentieth-century opera less satisfactory, it serves no purpose to ignore such preferences or to argue that they are simply based on ignorance or inexperience. In our free-wheeling artistic economy, room may have to be made for both, and also for a great deal that promises to be more novel than anything so far attempted.

A great debt is owed the Wheatland Foundation for holding the conference that launched this issue, for offering its transcript to *Daedalus*. Ann Getty, George Weidenfeld, and Humphrey Burton, chairman of the Venice meeting, deserve our special thanks. It is to be hoped that the American Academy of Arts and Sciences will be able to do other issues of this sort, on many of the major arts of our day. The traditional *Daedalus* method of publishing individual essays is not one suited to either the performing or the plastic arts. We are pleased that we have been able to make certain innovations with this issue; we hope to be able to make even greater ones in the arts issues now contemplated.

S.R.G.

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The Future of Opera

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Peter Diamand
August Everding
Hughes Gall
Ann Getty
Italo Gomez
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Ronald Grierson
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Gian Carlo Menotti
Jonathan Miller
Claus Moser
Harold Prince
Harold Rosenthal
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2

Rehearsing the Problems

GETTY

People with too much of a past may not have the best of prospects, but an art form is not a person, and one with as much of a past as opera must not go begging for a future. Yet, in literature, two such major forms as the epic and the pastoral have become as extinct as the dodo and the dinosaur. However, these genres died for good reason: war and patriotism ceased to be sublime, and the country could no longer pretend superiority over the city.

However, opera has not outlived its usefulness. People still want music, still want the human voice raised in song, and still want theater. Those three elements, combined and raised to the highest power, yield opera. Of course the concept of the "highest power" will vary from age to age, but many will agree that the highest power is not what the "competition" is offering—operetta, musical comedy, or rock concerts.

Nonetheless, we cannot pretend that opera is in a healthy state today. There still are composers dauntless enough to try their hands, but it is increasingly hard to find open-handed patrons and open-minded audiences. Costs have escalated, and education has plummeted. We must concede that opera, especially new opera, cannot be self-supporting. The consequences will be dire if even an excellent production of *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Bluebeard's Castle*, *Wozzeck*, or *The Flaming Angel* will not sell out.

In addition, there is a gap between the development of the art form and the development of the audience; this gap is greater in opera than in any other art form. If the gap becomes a chasm, opera may well follow the epic and the pastoral to extinction. I believe that the people gathered here are among those best qualified to evaluate the difficulties—cultural, economic, and creative—as well as the most able to offer suggestions that might lead to a path out of these difficulties. It is for this reason that I so much look forward to the discussion and to the introductory remarks of George Harewood.

HAREWOOD

Every six months or so I meet an old friend who runs a very large opera company, and I always ask how the season has gone.

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"Splendidly," comes the answer, with figures to show how the percentage has increased over the previous year, and how many additional performances have been sold out! It always seemed to be public approval as expressed at the box office that was invoked, never a trail-blazing production, a musical or an artistic achievement. Nevertheless, I am happy to say that this year it was slightly different. The catalogue actually started with a very real artistic breakthrough. I was delighted—but the figures did follow close behind. Still, at least the priorities now seemed to be in the right order.

Of course the box office is a very real measure of success, but the organization that measures all its achievements that way must recognize that it is given over to Mammon, not devoted to God at all—and what benefactor will continue voluntarily to sponsor that? Our attempts to be pragmatic and practical should not rule out some discussion of the art that we serve: what it is, why it is, what attracts people to it.

I think one of opera's needs today is for those who receive money, either from the state or through private sponsorship, to think through precisely what they are spending it on. There's a real temptation to play it safe, to produce an updated version of last year's program, invoking as we do so its high percentage and sold-out houses. That could be the riskiest decision of all, because opera is more than a mere commodity to sell to the public. It is not just "showbiz"; it is an evolving, sophisticated, exciting art form, and our achievements in it may—just may—change people's outlooks, perhaps even alter their lives.

Apart from money, what are opera's needs? What questions should we ask ourselves to ensure that it will continue to develop? How can we recognize that such development is a matter of evolution and not some kind of self-perpetuation? About fifteen years ago, the composer Hans Werner Henze was quoted as saying, "I could see that I would contribute no more new operas, masquerades, charades. I feel opera is finished. Yet the basic idea of putting drama to music is, of course, not finished." As far back as we can tell, man has demonstrated a need for ritual in order to celebrate vital issues, and music drama has always been associated with religious belief and religious ritual. Buffalo dances and rain dances are music drama. With the Greeks, in the centuries before

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Christ's birth, music drama reached what we now recognize was an unprecedented level of sophistication. Centuries ago we had mystery plays, miracle plays, *The Play of Daniel*—even the Christian Mass may be seen as music drama. In fact, as early as A.D. 21, the Mass was analyzed in something like those terms by Bishop Amalarius of Metz! Then, in the late 1500s and early 1600s, the Camerata in Florence, Monteverdi, and the great public opera houses of Venice developed. Without knowing it, we were away on the giddy skidway of a road called "Opera," which unites us all, whether we practice music drama or opera, be it at old theaters in Vicenza, at La Fenice; in temples of nineteenth-century art like La Scala, Covent Garden, and the Metropolitan; in the open air at Battignano or Santa Fe; or even in a drill hall in London's Bloomsbury.

Yet we do have problems, even if we have seasons sold to 96 percent capacity. To find some solutions in our time might ensure the continued evolution of opera, which can be constructive, rather than revolution, which may destroy what it hopes to reform.

Let me start with two accusations against opera that are constantly expressed, even though they are contradictory. The first is that opera is elitist, and the second is that opera is boring and heavy. The argument that opera is elitist seems to cover two quite different lines of thinking; one holds that it is expensively made for the few who understand and like it; the other, that it is designed for the snobbish, who want to be seen attending it. The argument that opera is dull involves a value judgment that can imply one of two things: either that the person making the judgment knows little of opera, or that we are gradually letting opera become predictable, and, in doing so, alienating at least a potential part of our audience.

A year ago, an unofficial association of intendants of opera companies planned a TV hook-up as one of the climaxes of European Music Year 1985. We wanted to show the brilliance and excitement of opera, its sheer power to delight, the stimulus it may have on the imagination of an audience. So far from being dull or elitist, opera, we wanted to say, is exciting and popular. The program will probably never be shown, but the reasons for considering it remain cogent.

One of opera's present problems is that over the centuries it has come to mean a variety of things to many people. Yet, in the great

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periods of opera's popularity in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, and even in the first thirty-nine years of the twentieth century, the accent was always on new works that people longed to hear, either accepting or rejecting them, as we still do with plays and musicals. Everything was sung in the language of the audience. Great men like Handel, or the impresarios of Gluck's, Mozart's, or Rossini's day, developed ensembles for whom they specifically wrote. Later, performers of genius like Mahler and Toscanini fostered ensembles of great potency. Individuals of talent and perception followed that example all over Europe. In those distant days, the competition that opera had to face in most of the great centers was very limited, in striking contrast to the situation that exists today.

Now, cinema, and perhaps television most of all, have taken over spectacle, which once belonged only to very big theaters. Television has substantially reduced people's inclination to leave home in the evening. It has also set contradictory, and perhaps debilitating, standards, which are nonetheless too widely accepted to be ignored. Today's average operatic audience is varied: it may include good old-fashioned season-ticket holders; others, in contrast, who long to get away from established practice and see something new; people who attend first nights simply to be seen; the individual who prefers not to understand words or plots, because they are such nonsense anyhow; those whose minds are closed to contemporary music and are insulted by its inclusion in a season; and the record addict who mistakes smoothness and absence of errors for perfection. It may be an exaggeration to insist that the one thing that binds a modern audience together is a hankering after music drama. Yet, I wonder if there is not just enough truth in this seemingly outrageous generalization to suggest that it could play a part, at least, in solving the problems of opera.

I hope that in the next day or two we shall think about our audience and what it needs and not simply about the tyranny of the box office, which inclines managements to give the public what it seems immediately to want. I hope, too, that we shall try to analyze the unalterable factors we must learn to live with, adapting to circumstances, but always also fighting abuses. We need to talk about composers who ought to get us out of our present rut but seem to have lost interest, insisting that they will not pander to

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popular taste. The result is that audiences do not meet them because managements cannot risk them. The bargain must be three-sided, involving the creative artist, the entrepreneur, and the listener. That bargain is made far too seldom.

We need to consider the apparently universal demand for the same recording stars, which, when combined with ease of travel, can lead to "instant opera," where the deep-frozen, jet-lagged substitute for a star is dropped for two days into hot water—laughingly known as rehearsal—and the audience is led to think it is getting the works, which it manifestly is not. I hope we shall talk about potentially useful singers, whose agents get them jobs singing languages they can't pronounce and don't understand, so that they develop a protective hide that makes them impervious not only to travel, but to rehearsal, colleagues, conductors, and directors. They give, it seems to me, the same chilly, disconnected, ungenerous performance wherever they are. I remember years ago a very good opera singer performing with a newcomer I was curious about. When asked for an opinion, the well-known singer responded, "Oh, she's already starting to sing for the fee!" In those days that was totally dismissive. Today, it seems to be becoming dangerously common; it is the kind of attitude that leads to dullness—a cardinal sin—and to a very incomplete realization of opera.

I hope our discussions will recognize that, if we are to change "music likers" into "opera lovers," we must offer vigorous, exciting theatrical experiences. Only then will they form our "audiences of the future," which can't be composed of supporters who come out of habit, and won't for long be composed of people who demand more and more of less and less, a kind of whirly-gig Roman circus. Indeed, if those of us concerned with promoting opera do our job, we should be providing the kind of experience that risks altering points of view, risks even permanently enriching lives.

PRINCE

The second opera that I directed was *La Fanciulla del West*. We performed it in Chicago, where I was lucky enough to fall into a solution to a great many of the problems directors usually face: I

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had a set that defeated all the singers who had performed *Fanciulla* elsewhere in the world. I had an Italian hero and a villain who were determined to move to the same marks they had moved to in other opera houses across the world. The trouble was, we had a large mountain that they had to work on, and we had extremely small rooms. The idea was to illustrate exactly how isolated people were. Whereas the singers were accustomed to taking twenty steps to cross the set, in this case they were stopped by a wall. While we carefully explained that they were just going to walk into that wall, they remained confused by the confines of the stage: "Why is this door so low?" "Because that's the way doors were." "Why is this ceiling slanted?" "Why do I have to duck like this?" "Why am I so confined?" and "Why do I have to spend so much time going up and down this mountain?" "Because there's a mine there, sir."

The point is that I had just gotten lucky. I had become saturated with one particular way of staging this opera. I no longer wanted to use the same forest and trees, and I had a terrible aversion to using animals on the stage, so I did not want to see any horses. I came to realize that I could save myself a lot of trouble if I were to devise a physical scheme that defeated anybody's desire, or obsession, to perform in exactly the way he had done elsewhere, though I admit that such an aim may be less easily realized if you are directing *Tosca*. You cannot simply put *her* on a mountain.

I was drawn to opera because it seemed to me, ten years ago, that popular musical theater did not have any real direction. I felt that because of television, radio, and the popular record, musicals had been reduced to the lowest common denominator, and that the theatrical element was quickly disappearing. I was indeed becoming increasingly bored with musical theater. I returned to opera, because it is first and foremost theatrical, stimulating, and exciting in a strangely ageless way. Productions of operas that are a hundred years old do not have the dated feeling that a musical popular twenty years ago does. I went into opera because I thought there was an opportunity to join a lot of other very talented people in putting theater back into an operatic experience. I had been bored too frequently in too many fancy opera houses, hearing well-sung but not very well-acted works, and seeing poorly realized productions. Since then I have not felt anything but encouragement. I know that there are large numbers of people far younger

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than I who are expressing an interest in opera, and who, as an age group, were not much interested in opera twenty years ago. I think that is because they are simply not getting lusty, lively, involving, transcendent theatrical experience anywhere else today.

SILLS

One problem I face is that we producers are not allowed the privilege or the luxury of failure. A donor has to give the same amount of money to finance a world premiere as he does for a new *Traviata*. There is no difference in cost between the two productions. As a matter of fact, the world premiere generally costs more because the rehearsal costs are enormous. If you stage a new *Traviata*, you do not have to teach the music to the chorus, and the orchestra knows it well. Even with a new conductor, you merely add two or three orchestra rehearsals and you're in business. But in the case of any new work, the rehearsal bill is enormous. The donor wants to get his money's worth, yet knows that he is making a huge investment, and that had he invested in *Bohème* or *Traviata* the show would probably appear in the program for the next six or seven years—at least in our company. A new work is a big risk. It may play four or five performances and never be heard again. It also makes tremendous demands both on the audience and on the press. We are asking them to come in for the first time, listen to the work, absorb the plot, text, music, singing, sets, costumes, and direction. There is not an audience in the world sophisticated enough to cope with such a challenge. Members of the press do try hard. In our house they may attend several rehearsals, and many of the critics ask for the score, taking it home to learn it. Still, they are expected to write a critique of the performers as well as of the work.

I feel that the principal reason that new works are growing scarcer is that we lack funding for experimental work, for improving the repertoire. As it is, we have a grand total of about five days to remedy what may turn out to be major problems; two days later, we stage the world premiere, perhaps with a number of very nervous singers, who are having trouble with the music itself.

It is a fact that a great many composers today have never taken a single singing lesson. It would not hurt them to spend six weeks

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with a good vocal coach learning the limitations of the human voice, which is just not that malleable an instrument. I can remember being forced to sing a high C-sharp on the word "Hiroshima"; when I insisted that I could not manage it, I was told, "All right, make it sound like the screaming of the atom bomb"! Nobody understood that I was saying "Hiroshima"; since the name of the aria was "Ban the Bomb," I assumed that the word "Hiroshima" was rather important. On the other hand, *The Ballad of Baby Doe* was written by Douglas Moore, who knew an enormous amount about the human voice, and although it may not be the most sophisticated composition of our time, it was without question one of the most singable works that we premiered.

ROSENTHAL

Has Beverly fallen into the trap that many prima donnas have in claiming that certain composers write in too difficult a way for the voice? One has only to think back on how the singers in Verdi's day complained that Verdi could not write for the voice, that he was a destroyer of the human voice, that *Rigoletto* and *La Traviata* were unsingable. The same complaint occurred in Wagner's time. I remember how Ernestine Schumann-Heink, confronted with Klytemnästra in the first *Elektra*, said, "You know, we're just a lot of mad, screaming women. Strauss can't write for the voice." Composers have always been accused of this, and yet opera has survived, singers have survived, adapting their styles from one generation to meet the requirements of another.

SILLS

The rule today is that we no longer sing in opera houses but in arenas. We are building shrines. One no longer thinks of building a beautiful opera house with perhaps twelve hundred or fourteen hundred seats. I see twenty-two-year-old singers standing on the stage of the New York State Theater—a theater with three thousand seats—which is wholly inappropriate. We have to be a little more cautious; we are forcing new singers into a situation they are really ten years away from. When I travel around Germany, I see where our young American singers have disap-

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peared to; they are singing in nine-hundred-seat houses. It is indeed self-defeating to build houses of immense size.

MOSER

I would like to ask Beverly, if I may, two very specific questions. At Covent Garden, we often commission operas, but we don't necessarily perform them. Often they are not viable for performance. Hence my question. First, how do you deal with commissioned works that you choose not to perform? Do you have a contract in which you agree to perform everything that is commissioned? Second, and perhaps more interesting, do you think there is scope for more international collaboration between our houses in commissioning or in performing works that turn out not to suit one theater, but might suit another?

SILLS

To answer your first question, if we take money from the New York State Arts Council for a commission, there is a stipulation in the agreement that we must perform the work in New York. Like it or not, the work will be performed, because of the terms of the agreement.

MOSER

Does this involve everything you commission, or only the pieces for which you receive funding from the state?

SILLS

I would imagine that if we went to the Endowment for the Arts they would not demand that of us, but the New York State Arts Council does have that arrangement.

SMITH

This is not the case with the National Endowment for the Arts. We have a plan by which you can be funded at various stages of development: at the creative stage, in the development stage, indeed up to actual production. At any one stage you can decide to stop work. In other words, if you foresee a failure, we are very glad

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to have spent the money, but that is where it ends. A substantial number of works, however, are in fact staged.

SÖDERSTRÖM-OLOW

Beverly has mentioned how rough contemporary music can be on the performer's vocal chords; we call it "to sing with an obbligato throat, doctor." As you know, Ligeti composed *Le Grand Macabre* especially for an ensemble at the Royal Opera in Stockholm. He spent twelve years composing this opera, and when it finally arrived, I did not have a top E. I told him I did not think I could sing the part. "How do you know?" he said. If you never move your stake, you will never get anywhere." I thought that was a sweet comment after thirty-five years in music.

Ligeti also said, "You invite the critics to come to some rehearsals to prepare themselves for the opening night, but what about the audience?" I think we ought to spend at least six months trying to become familiar with new music, understand it, and perform it. If we do this, we ought at least to offer the audiences the same opportunity, to try to ease them into performances. That is what we in Stockholm attempt to do, especially when we perform on the small stage, and we are fortunate enough to be in a small house.

On the question of popular composers going into opera, I am reminded of a joke. George Gershwin wanted to compose serious music, so he went to Stravinsky, who said, "Mr. Gershwin, how much do you earn in one year?" Gershwin responded something like, "Three hundred thousand dollars," and Stravinsky said, "Then I think it would be better for me to take lessons with you." Very often people in my profession are tempted to go into popular music. Why do we sing music that people do not want and do not understand when we can earn ten times the fee in popular music? Why? Because we believe in this art form; it stimulates the listener. I want to activate my audiences, both onstage and offstage.

PRINCE

My question moves to the issue of why we cannot learn something from the process that nurtured the popular musical theater for so many years. The benefactor and the composer are both gun-shy for

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precisely the same reason: because the show is not a *Madama Butterfly*; it can't play one performance at La Scala, go away for six months, and then come up somewhere else, in a smaller Italian house, transformed into a *Madama Butterfly*. We should be seriously concerned with insuring that new works are performed frequently so that they do not have to sink or swim on one stage—particularly the stage of an important central opera house. The opera that Beverly is currently staging is receiving the kind of nurturing that I am talking about. Perhaps you would like to describe it, Beverly, because I really think there is something to be learned in recreating that experience for opera composers and entrepreneurs.

SILLS

It's still "in workshop." However, this fall all three acts will be staged together for the first time, in very reduced circumstances. It will not have a full orchestra, but it will be performed four times before the public so that by the time I get to the world premiere, there will be a great many changes from these first performances in October 1985 to the 1986 production. The young composer has had time to correct and rework. We are sharing the considerable costs with everybody who has been workshopping the piece—we are splitting the director's fees, the lighting designer's fees, the copying fees, and the correcting fees. I think it is a marvelous work, worth all the time and energy that has gone into it, but it is coming in at an extremely high price—approximately half a million dollars. I can stage a new *Traviata* for two hundred thousand.

BURTON

Terry, do you know anything about sharing production, and the kind of collaboration Claus Moser referred to?

MCEWEN

We have tried, but I think shared productions have a way of robbing an opera house of its artistic individuality. If you stage nothing but "Second-Hand Rose," you end up without any individual identity. I think it is a good idea for us to share productions occasionally, but only occasionally. It is, I believe, an

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opera director's job—and it is the most desirable aspect of an opera house—to have an individual personality and style. All the great directors and opera houses of history have had their own style, which will be lost if we constantly share productions. Seldom does anyone involved in a production have the same view of the work as someone involved in the same production in another theater, let alone two directors! When one also considers the number of people involved in any single production, it is easy to see where one can run into real trouble.

I would also like to say to Harold Prince that a new work can still be a *Madama Butterfly*. It is very dangerous to say that we cannot have an opera that first proves a disastrous flop, then goes on the road and comes back a hit. I was very lucky to be living in England in the 1950s, and to see the world premieres of many wonderful operas, including *Troilus and Cressida*, a favorite of mine, which was fairly successful at its premiere at Covent Garden. It then toured America, where it was a resounding flop in two different opera houses. It was tried in several other countries as well, and has recently returned to Covent Garden in a slightly reconstructed form, as *Madama Butterfly* did, and it is a great success.

Finally, I would like to add to what Harold Prince said: if you go to half the small towns in Germany, you will see *Tosca* produced in a toilet seat, in a coffin, or on a mountain—anything you like. There is no limit to the ways in which you can stage an opera.

GOMEZ

The financial difficulties that any opera production faces involve both private and government resources that, in one way or another, influence the final result. In the past, it was always private money that was involved in Venice; in other places, it was simply a question of whether the difference between the price of the tickets and the cost of the production would balance. Today, throughout the world, one has to choose between financing by private means or by public funds. Naturally this involves not only measuring the total cost, but also selecting singers, which work to perform, which orchestra, which technicians, which chorus, and, as in any other business, how to work with the trade unions. We all have these

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problems, making it immensely difficult to arrive at a repertoire that the public will like and understand. Today, we are indeed faced with a great number of alternatives.

In our small theater, seating 1,000 people, there will always be too few seats to cover the costs of the production. In my experience, for every person on the stage, in the chorus, or on the technical side, we need two people in the audience. Our main problem is how to cope logically with this ratio, so that we can survive. Means of economizing are often an illusion. Doing a coproduction in Australia, America, and Europe has its own problems: transportation costs alone would offset any saving on the production.

There is also the problem of commissions. Operas such as *Traviata, Rigoletto, Ernani, Attila,* and *Simon Boccanegra* created history because they were immediately successful; they are still widely performed because of their complete initial acceptance by the public. Modern composers, on the other hand, are not so readily accepted. If we commission an opera by Stockhausen or Luciano Berio, for example, success is by no means guaranteed. Verdi and Puccini did not enjoy complete success, but they did have a 70 or 80 percent success rate with their works. Today, acceptance of a modern work is far more controversial, and the public is divided. Generally only one or two directors who admire and believe in a modern composer will stage his works. My remarks may appear somewhat cynical, but it is a fact that during the past few years the circulation of a new opera has become ever more restricted.

BARBIERI

There is a dearth of training facilities for musicians and singers, and a resulting lack of opportunity for the public to learn about and understand modern opera. The public, especially in Italy, does not arrive prepared to hear modern works; they need to be prepared for what they are going to listen to, but there are no facilities for this preparation. If productions are good, they should be performed more often. In the past a work was performed perhaps twenty times; now it might have three performances, after

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which the money spent on costumes and scenery is wasted. Surely more performances of new works would help.

RUDEL

The problems seem to be universal, the solutions are not: opera is too multifaceted. I think, for example, that a workshop may be useful for some works and for some composers; others may not benefit from it. I am sure Benjamin Britten did not need one, nor Strauss, nor Verdi. So while it may work in one case, it may not in another. I think we have also overlooked the audience somewhat. We talk about singers preparing for six months. Do we also expect the audience to prepare for six months just to have some appreciation for a work? Are we moving totally away from the original plan that opera is to be, and I quote, "an entertainment of the highest order"? Do we really need to ask the audience to learn more and more? Can they look at Wagner now, and Strauss, and still learn more? They also need something that catches them the first time around, and I think that is most important.

GRIERSON

I have a question related to a point made earlier by Beverly Sills. I was impressed by her saying that it is difficult for young singers in particular to perform in what she calls "arenas," rather than in opera houses. I was wondering whether there is, in fact, a future for the smaller opera house, because that would be the logical sequel to her point. The economics of course may make it impossible.

SILLS

I'm afraid it is not feasible. We are on a treadmill: if we don't have enough seats to bring in a given amount of money, we cannot make the budget so that we have enough money to put on the commissioned work. It is indeed a question of economics. Otherwise, we would not need these big houses.

BURTON

Is it not also true that the great opera houses in Europe overcome these economic problems? La Scala has a workshop, Piccola Scala, which does productions on a small scale.

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CRAWFORD

The problem in Sydney, which seats only fourteen hundred, is that the house relies on a combination of private funding—actually very little public funding—and therefore the box office does play a large role.

GRIERSON

"Workshop" is not synonymous with small opera house, is it?

BURTON

No, quite different. We are now asking whether the future of opera could lie in smaller houses. It is one question that obviously does not make sense with the members of the Met and the Royal Opera House here!

MENOTTI

But the bigger the opera house, the bigger the deficit. . . .

SILLS

It is indeed a no-win situation!

Finding and Training Young Voices

BANFIELD

I am rather optimistic about the number of good singers there are in the world, but I must admit that the way that one tries to find them is not always the right way. I do not favor contests because I know of many in Europe where those who came out with the greatest honors did not succeed or follow the career that one would have expected of them. On the other hand, singers who in the same contest were not in the first rank eventually had splendid careers. It is a little like an audition; the audition can always be a partial failure. There are singers who can do a marvelous audition and then are not able to perform at all on the stage, and vice versa. So I insist that an opera director should actually try to hear as many singers in performance as he can. Beverly Sills says she often does

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this in Germany, and that she has heard many good voices there. We found some of the voices who are now in most demand in the most obscure places. We heard Luciana Serra singing *Traviata* in a movie house in a village near here, and it was clear that she was a performer. I heard Leo Nucci in a small city near Padua and engaged him right away. I had had some trouble with *Figaro* in Trieste, and I engaged him for that. However, from that moment on, I did not give him stellar roles. The following year, he sang Sonora in *La Fanciulla del West*; the year after, Kyoto in *Iris* by Mascagni, then came Dr. Malatesta, who was already something more ambitious, and then *Luisa Miller*, and finally his first Rigoletto. It took a certain amount of time, and I think that such experience should be stressed for singers. If you find a voice—even if it is an important voice—do not immediately project the singer into the big roles; that can really destroy his potential and his nerve. I use the word "nerve" because I do not know exactly how you run the bigger houses, such as the Metropolitan, Covent Garden, and San Francisco. I know what happens in the smaller houses like La Fenice, Trieste, and Bologna. We are in love with performances. In Trieste, we give nine performances of each opera and ten of the most popular ones. Nevertheless, we can never find a major star who is willing to remain for a month in one place. On the other hand, we face the crucial problem of the subscribers. The subscribers want the same treatment as the other houses give. How can one satisfy them and at the same time understand that a major star does not want to spend almost one month in Trieste? Believe it or not, more and more singers tell me they cannot sing the same opera more than five times without getting a case of "nerves." It is quite extraordinary. A new tenor recently came to me and said, "I can sing five *Butterfly*s, but I am going to go berserk if I sing it a sixth time." I had to find another tenor just because of "nerves."

BURTON

It may be because I am on the outside of your world that I take a simplistic view of the problem of discovering voices. Certainly my own view has been modified since reading the voluminous information coming out of America, particularly about the "Opera America" movement, which offers large numbers of scholarships

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and auditions, of methods, of prizes—ways of finding singers. But one might ask if there is a parallel with the enormous success in Germany, particularly in Eastern Germany with the discovery of athletes, and in the success Sweden has experienced with tennis players, which has elevated that country to the most important tennis country per capita in the world. Is there a similar way in which, by spending money, one could sweep through the schools, bringing singers of fourteen or fifteen years in front of panels of judges who would be, as it were, junior singing scouts? Or is this mere illusion because in fact voices do not start to become truly recognizable until the age of eighteen, nineteen, or twenty? I think Elisabeth was already on the stage as a teenager. Was she unique in the world of opera, or are there many more singers who could be found if the money were there to look for them?

WHELDON

May I remind others of an experience I had many years ago when Glyndebourne was starting up again after the war? There was an immediate need for a chorus, but nobody was available. So Jani Strasser advertised in the newspaper on the grounds that all sorts of people thought they were born opera singers, after having seen opera for the first time in various countries during the war. He and Sir Steuart Wilson came down to hold auditions, which turned out to be quite remarkable. Hundreds of people who thought they were meant by God to sing in the Glyndebourne chorus applied—especially as the commitment was to be only for six weeks during the summer. There were bus conductors, colliers, teachers, and nurses—all sorts. We arranged a first run-through and were able to get as many as two hundred voices for Jani Strasser and Steuart Wilson to hear and judge according to their own extremely simple rules. The first rule was that, if the voice was too small, the entrant was excluded. Second, if the voice was too tricky or already too stylistically formed, it was ruled out. They were looking for putatively big voices with no bad habits! Out of a list of about forty, they took on some twenty-five.

I conclude from that experience that, if there is a will to play tennis, or if there is a will to play football, if there is a great cultural will of some kind to bring things into being, human beings can

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achieve them, including singing. It is most important for the singer to want to sing, and for the impresario somehow or other to collect those singers. The will to sing was useful in England in 1945, in the sense that there was great confusion and chaos in society, and people were ready to take on adventure. Now, it would be much more difficult to get three or four hundred people to audition for Glyndebourne. For people like Jani Strasser and Steuart Wilson, who were absolutely clear in their own minds about what they wanted, and who were, moreover, prepared to train prospective singers, I believe the discovery of voices was quite simple. It is a matter of will.

MCEWEN

I agree absolutely with what Huw Wheldon said. The vocal talent is obviously only part of the requirement for a potential star, or a potentially excellent *comprimario*—another species that is becoming harder to find. I do not think there is a shortage of singers in the world today, but we do have to work a little harder to find them because there are so many more opera houses demanding their services. We all know why an artist is no longer willing to stay with one theater long enough to become a member of the company, or even to mature very far as an artist.

The achievement I am most proud of, since I came to the San Francisco house, is the formation of what we call our "Opera Center," which is a three-stepped training program. The young singers in this program have one thing in common: while they may not all have great voices, they all have ambition. When we first put the Opera Center together and began auditioning, we spread the word that those who were successful in our training program would appear on the stage of the San Francisco Opera. Suddenly the very best young singers in the United States began competing to enter our auditions. We have a team, like Jani Strasser and company, that travels around the United States doing auditions, and the young people manage to get to them. As a result of its becoming known that we provide a very full training program at the Center, as well as a chance to appear on the stage of the San Francisco Opera House, the quality of the young singers who try out has risen by a factor of perhaps 20 percent.

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Those chosen through our auditions are placed in the Merola Program, named for the first director of the San Francisco Opera. We take approximately twenty singers for about six weeks, and coach them for specific performances. During that time we stage two operas. They learn the roles; we learn how smart they are, how quickly they can learn, and how musical they are. They are also exposed to at least one great artist during that time who gives them master classes in general problems. Regine Crespin is there at the moment; others have included Sir Geraint Evans and Elisabeth Schwarzkopf. At the end of the six weeks, the ones we have found to be unmusical, without talent, or who are impossible as colleagues, are allowed to disappear quietly. The others stay on and join the Western Opera Theater, a touring company of young singers that uses minimal sets, and works with either a chamber orchestra or two pianos, touring the western half of the United States. Obviously, we always keep the singers who fit into the cast of the touring opera. If you are performing *Don Giovanni*, you do not need a heroic tenor. On the other hand, if there is a heroic tenor, we invite him into the company, since that is the voice in shortest supply.

The next step for the new singer is the Adler Fellowship, which we award to the most promising—those whom I can guarantee are going to be stars. There can be anywhere from six to fifteen of them. They cover roles in the main company during the principal season; they sing secondary roles and are moved along very slowly.

I remember the case of one young woman, a very impressive mezzosoprano, who will make her Metropolitan debut this coming (1985–86) season as Amneris, and who said to me, "I won't sing Inez in *Trovatore*. I don't want to sing small parts. I'm going to be a diva." I replied, "You're already a diva; that's why you are giving me a hard time! But I want you to stand beside Leontyne Price. I want you to watch her work. I want you to watch her shake. I want you to watch how she copes with her problems. I want you to watch her move into the light. I want you to watch her and learn how she does it—she's a 'pro.' " At the end of that series of performances of *Trovatore*, the woman admitted she had never learned so much in her life.

If a performer we have engaged cancels, then we give the performance to a young artist. For instance, the young woman I

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just mentioned stepped in for Marilyn Horne in *Samson and Delilah*. When I had a cancellation of my Despina in *Così Fan Tutte* a couple of years ago, I substituted Ruth-Ann Swenson, an Adler Fellow, who was covering the part for Norma Burrows. She was magnificent. Recently, when Hugues Gall in Geneva had a cancellation of his Despina, I sent him Ruth-Ann and she was sensational. The point is that I know no other way of finding good singers than the audition.

Of course we all know people who can sing wonderful auditions but do bad performances. When you are interviewing for a secretary, there are people who will do a wonderful interview but later prove unsatisfactory. That is commonplace. There seems to be no way other than to travel to small opera houses to listen to and audition as many singers as possible, even in out-of-the-way places. There seem to be certain places to find young singers. Barfus in Düsseldorf has discovered nine-tenths of the good German singers in the last twenty years. So it follows that, if you go to Düsseldorf, you are likely to hear somebody good. I also think there are ways of making these brilliant young people into exceptional artists. In the long run, I hope to build a company based on them, because I have had enough of tenors who come in the day before the dress rehearsal and who get "nervous" after five performances and have to leave. There are plenty of wonderful young voices waiting in the wings to replace them.

MENOTTI

I think we are ignoring the fundamental problem of young singers—the size of the opera house. We should have smaller opera houses. Unfortunately, in America and all over Europe, people are building huge theaters of three thousand or four thousand seats. So many of our wonderful young singers cannot fill such large houses. They are destined for—and should be kept in—small opera houses. We pay huge sums to the sacred monsters simply because they can fill the Metropolitan. How can we keep these young people from making the grave mistake of going to San Francisco, La Scala, or Covent Garden where they can barely be heard? Let us face it, when the audience goes to those big theaters, they want big voices—good or bad!

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BURTON

Have you, in the past, found big voices?

MENOTTI

I have found big voices, but I have always put them in small theaters, which I love, and where I believe the future of opera actually lies. The big golden barns of the world are facing difficulties, and I'm not sure how much longer they will survive.

BURTON

There is also the question of conducting. Can a relatively small voice be heard if the orchestra is not adapted accordingly? Has it partly to do with the musical style? The English National Opera is a very big house, but we can hear every word sung there because the conductors are accustomed to keeping the orchestra down.

MENOTTI

Well, yes, but at the same time the whole performance lacks excitement. It is wonderful to be able to have a real crescendo and still hear the voice coming through. You can accomplish that, as I did in Spoleto where we staged *Tristan und Isolde*. The singers were not famous, but it was a very exciting performance. Because the house was small, the voices were heard all the time and the orchestra sounded huge. Unfortunately, that kind of excitement is difficult to create in houses that are not only too big, but also have very poor acoustics.

BURTON

The size of the opera house is a major question. Perhaps a satisfactory future for opera will be achieved only when Mr. Boulez's injunction from twenty years ago, "Burn down the opera houses," has finally been implemented. Meanwhile we have the large houses, and even more are being built.

RUDEL

We all agree that the voices are there to be found, but will need to be trained. I recently read a short biography of a relatively unknown German singer, Johanna Geissler. She started in

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Hanover and from there went on to Dortmund, then to Mainz and Cologne. In each house she grew and became more famous. She was building an audience and was well on her way to stardom when she met and married Otto Klemperer. That was the end of that particular career, but I think her story is indicative of how a career *should* be built. We are short-circuiting that route these days, partly because of our quest to find new stars. Occasionally there are people who spring immediately to the fore, but in many cases it takes long preparation. We don't allow them that time, yet we are surprised to find so few stars. The superstars we do have achieve this position because the media focus on a few names, and, since news travels fast and the television and news people are ever eager for new fodder, these singers are catapulted into fame and become uncontrollable monsters. In the old days, when each house and each city had its own stars, they were, perhaps, minor stars, but nevertheless large fish in a small pond, and they were fine. From their ranks came those few true superstars whose names became legend. But it was a slow process. I do not think it has anything to do with the size of the houses. I disagree with Gian Carlo: there have always been large houses; there have always been bad acoustics. Moreover, in the old days the conductors had much more of an interest in helping singers along. Today, many conductors let the singers be prepared by an assistant, then come in later and take over, leaving very little time to make corrections. So, singers really do not get the fundamentals directly from the maestro. Serafin, for example, really worked with singers, helping them vocally, showing them how to make the voice larger, how to project better. The crucial stage then, to my mind, is preparing the voice, rather than finding it.

SILLS

I want to point out that it is the impresario who creates the monster. Last week a gentleman who runs an opera company in the United States asked for one of my young singers to come to his city for two weeks to rehearse *La Bohème* because Placido could not appear until two days before the actual performance. He was offering an astronomical fee for this young man—whom I guarantee three-quarters of you have never heard of. He is a very good

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young singer, and I would have had to release him from two *Lucia*s in our house. I refused to allow it. At the moment, he is not greeting me in the hallways because I have deprived him of a very hefty sum! Yet, he should not have been seduced in this manner by that impresario in the first place. Second, Mr. Domingo should not have been allowed to appear so late.

However, at one point in my career I found myself in exactly the same situation. Fifteen years ago, I could have gone to any opera company on any terms. Nobody ever made demands of me. I was always astonished to find that when I refused an offer by saying, "Your performance is on Friday, and I can't arrive until Wednesday," I would be told, "That's fine." They had what was known as the "Golden Season" and the "Silver Season." The "silver" singer would do all the rehearsals, then the "golden" one would come in and take over.

At La Scala, when I went back for *Lucia*, I had three different tenors in three nights. I was never told that there would be a change of cast. Mr. Cioni walked on stage, shook my hand, said "Cioni!" and began to sing! That is precisely what happened. At the next performance, Mr. Sansogno, the conductor, became ill. Again, I was never told there would be a change of conductor. In the midst of *Lucia*, with its ornamentations and flute cadenzas, I looked down—and I'm blind as a bat!—and did not see that familiar white hair. I thought, "Who is that man?" As a result, I broke a three-year contract and never went back to La Scala.

The impresarios indeed create monsters. I do not face that particular problem because we do not deal with stars, being an ensemble company where people sign on for a long period of time. Perhaps it is true that today we have begun to accept lower quality in order to sell more tickets because of the prevailing economic situation in the United States, where support is rather limited. Nevertheless I think the fault lies mainly with a great many of the impresarios who accept a lower quality of performance just to guarantee a full house.

BURTON

Beverly, can I ask you about the scheme Terry described, the Merola project? Are you envious of the program? Do you think

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this is something that would apply all over America, and indeed all over Europe?

SILLS

Well, I do have a similar program, which differs slightly in that I guarantee performances. I have created a national touring company, which goes to forty cities in seventeen states, playing at universities. They do not go into major theaters, so the production is scaled accordingly. The company travels with a twenty-five-piece orchestra and a chorus of twelve. It is a full production, but very easy to fund because there is such great enthusiasm for educational projects for young singers. This is one of the few debt-free areas of the New York City Opera regime at the moment!

The question of who trains singers today is another subject; there are so many charlatans in the business. Finding a singer with a big voice and no bad habits has become almost impossible. Even at the conservatory level, when they are fresh from college, they have preconceived ideas of how to act. I do not know just how valuable old singers really are as master-class instructors. I have taught quite a few classes myself and have watched some on television that I thought were rather funny.

BURTON

If you had half a million dollars, you might do well to create a conservatory dedicated to teaching the teaching of singing.

SILLS

There is a gap between the time when young singers graduate from college or conservatory and when they become ready to walk on the stage of the New York City Opera, where they will not only have to deal with Leontyne Price, but also with themselves as performers on that level. That gap is where my company fits in.

MOSER

As we are identifying villains—impresarios have been identified, and others—I would give pride of place to the television and video world, though it obviously has constructive as well as destructive effects. First of all, much of the new public is drawn to the opera

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house simply because of having seen Domingo and Pavarotti on television, rather than by a fondness for music drama *per se*. These are the people who demand the superstars. In that sense, television does not help the live houses. I am even more concerned about another aspect of television's influence, which affects not just the "sacred monsters" but extends down into the ranks: that is, contractual arrangements, the stranglehold of the impresario over the singer. Time and again we have casting problems at Covent Garden; we cannot cast as we would like because, for example, Ms. "X" has a TV or video contract that makes it impossible for her to appear in our *Der Rosenkavalier*, because another *Rosenkavalier* is going to be televised, or videoed, and she has already signed an exclusive contract.

I also feel that a lot more could be done for national opera studios, along the lines Terry has evidently developed in San Francisco. Another important area would be the creation of more travel scholarships for young artists in the opera world.

Finally, on the same subject, let us not forget the conductor, rather under-valued in our discussion so far. To my mind the conductor is the most important person in the opera house, and we really ought to do something to help young potential conductors as well as singers.

BURTON

As somebody who has worked in television for twenty-seven years, I do not think the question of whether or not Mr. Domingo charges large fees has anything to do with television. I think it reflects the fact that he fills the hall with exciting performances. It seems to me to be perfectly fair practice for singers to sign exclusive contracts. If a company invests several hundred thousand pounds in creating a film, the least they can do is ensure that their star does not sing the same role for a rival company within the year. I think they have the right to protect their interests as long as a balance is created between what the film company is prepared to pay and what future engagements the singer is prepared to risk losing.

SÖDERSTRÖM-OLOW

I recently finished a master class in Lapland and I assure you that the potential for finding good singers is there. These young people

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have been training their voices, and I am sure many would have a chance in an audition. But when it comes to stage movement, you must be prepared to teach them. You will also need to show them how to approach the emotional side of the parts they are going to perform. This discrepancy is found everywhere in the world. I have worked in the United States on several opera stages with fantastic young singers. They are certainly much better trained than my generation ever was; they can learn a part, and sing it without a single mistake at an orchestra rehearsal the following day. But the emotional side of the performance is lacking because they have not had the chance to work on it.

I belong to that fortunate group of people who were trained through performance on the stage. When I came to the Royal Opera at the age of nineteen, there was a big gap in the lyric soprano rank, so I was onstage six times a week. One evening I would sing a very small part; the next night I had a major role. We would perform Puccini, Wagner, Mozart—all on consecutive nights. It was tough training, but it was ideal. There are few opera houses today with that repertoire.

What happens in Sweden is that one little opera group pops up after the other. Right now we have a group called *folkopera* in Stockholm—"people's opera." They have played a hundred and twenty performances of *Aïda* in an old movie theater that seats about 1,000 people. With two casts, they cannot afford a full orchestra, so they work with synthesizers, and you would probably be shocked if you heard them perform. But it does give these young people a chance to be on the stage and to perform under all circumstances. They learn their jobs by constant performance.

If you gave all young singers a chance to belong to an ensemble, they would jump at the opportunity. Since there are so few ensembles in the world today, most of them miss out on this practice period, and they turn to auditions just to get a job. If they had the chance to work with an ensemble for a longer period of time, I am sure they would not mind singing a small part one night and a larger one the next.

Also, we have been complaining about singers not wanting to stay in one place for a long time, but few conductors will actually come to work with the singers when they begin practicing the role with just a piano. We were more fortunate in Stockholm. When I

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started my career, we were taught from the very first piano rehearsal by the man who would be conducting the performances. Nowadays we have guest conductors who come and take over only when the performance has been in rehearsal for three weeks. Sometimes their *tempi* are so different that you cannot recognize the opera as the same you have learned.

As far as sound and theater size are concerned, I have sung in all types of theaters. As you know, I do not have a huge voice, but I can often compensate in a very big house, because in many instances the acoustics are better there than in small houses. The Stockholm Opera is not a large house; it seats only twelve hundred people. When I started working there, we performed in front of canvas sets that projected our voices across the pit. Today's sets are more imaginative and less substantial. In Stockholm, the number of players in the orchestra has now increased. The orchestra is taking up actual house space, so that the sound from the opera goes up into the ceiling in a way that then reflects it out toward the audience. Since there is nothing onstage to help the voices, the sound goes straight up into the attic above the stage, yet nothing is being done about it. I have sung the part of the Marschallin with various sets in various theaters, and I know from experience that the sets can be a great help to the singer.

There is another problem that surprises me in my travels around the world. Bayreuth has situated the orchestra where they can play full sound without drowning the voices. Dallas is the only other place where I found that kind of arrangement for the orchestra. When we performed *Rosenkavalier* in Dallas, the orchestra played full and it was still a conversation piece. Balancing sound, of course, is very often in the hands of the conductor, especially with the Strauss and Wagner operas. I was in a production of *Rosenkavalier* in Stockholm conducted by Rudolf Kempe. After the first rehearsal, he came up to us saying, "Why are you all shouting so much?" and we said, "You know, it is a very difficult orchestration and we want to be heard." "That," said Maestro Kempe, "is my problem." He actually conducted Strauss's score so that you could whisper the first-act conversation and still be heard. So it is not only the size of the house that presents a problem.

There is another issue I would like to discuss. Today we are not only competing with recordings—whenever you perform nowa-

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days you are compared to the best-known recording of that piece—but we are also compared to pop music! This has very serious implications. Today, you can go to a sports stadium to hear Bruce Springsteen or Liza Minnelli, who recently performed in a very large stadium holding approximately fifty thousand people. She appeared tiny from my vantage point, but her voice carried throughout the house, and I thought, "If I could only have a little microphone like that, I could sing Wagner!" When we see the television performances of big opera stars singing *Aïda*, for instance, we wonder why they should have to make so much effort to create this noise, because on the screen the sound is no bigger than it would have been with a small voice.

Finally, I am in total agreement with what has been said about auditioning singers. What kind of singers do we want? What kind of singers do audiences want? Beverly and I have been arguing for years over drama and music style. Very often, when I am on a world tour, I wonder if that is what the audiences really want. In my opinion, 75 percent of the people who attend opera are afraid of becoming too much involved in the drama. They are afraid of emotions; they want to see opera as they see a circus performance. The singer is treated like a trapeze artist. If the performance is poor, the audience thinks, "Wrong! Hallelujah, I can boo!" If it is good, more "Hallelujah," because then, "I can scream!" I do not know how this might be remedied.

If I had money, I would do as the Swedish business firms do: support young opera singers and give them the chance to perform. It is only in performing that you can learn this profession. If you get enough chances to perform, you will not become one of those horrible stars who do not want to rehearse.

GALL

I run a rather small theater, and I do not have the advantage of a big support team, so I have to be available in the theater; I also have to visit as many performances as possible. My problem is in combining those two duties. I am always very happy when singers—either pupils or already-confirmed singers—are prepared to audition for me. Of course, a lot of singers do not perform well at auditions, but at least I can get an idea of the quality of the voice.

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Indeed, I can get a good deal of information during an audition; so I support that method. I am also interested in competitions, because when you spend three or four days in a place you can listen to greater numbers of singers. It is more advantageous to attend performances, to jump on an airplane and find yourself in Frankfurt, or in Düsseldorf, or in other German houses where they still have an ensemble. Naturally you can judge a singer's qualities far better when he or she is performing on the stage. I try to do both. If I were richer, I would love to have two talent scouts whose judgment and taste I could trust. I could send them in my place, and they would report back to me.

BURTON

I wonder whether there is a realistic possibility of having an international scout who does not work for any one company but simply reports—rather like Matthew Epstein? When I was young there was a political journalist, Stephen King-Hall, who used to publish a quasi-political paper—*Commander Stephen King-Hall's Newsletter*—which was allegedly objective. He simply passed on the news that he and his close associates heard. I suppose you could say the nearest thing to that today is Harold Rosenthal and the critics writing in *Opera* magazine, which reports from all points of the globe on the performances they have heard. They are, perhaps, concerned with a slightly higher level of performer than the conservatory singer, but do we need something along that line?

SILLS

Elisabeth and I, having been trained in exactly the same way, are in total agreement. In my opinion, you can never train a singer in the studio. You have to put him or her on the stage to learn the craft. In our day there used to be what were known as "bus-and-truck" shows, which performed in very controlled circumstances. That is why I formed our national touring company: to put these young people on the stage, but not in so challenging a situation that they could not survive, such as being exposed to the Chicago critics, who tend to review new artists as they do the great, established singers. I put these inexperienced performers in universities; we book the performances through a concert bureau. It is, in short, a very controlled situation. We have two or three casts that alternate,

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and we stage about forty performances of *Traviata* and forty of *Bohème*. This quickly eliminates the singer who cannot concentrate long enough to sing through six *Butterfly*s! You wind up with a young singer who comes home with the experience of as many as twenty Mimis. She has learned how to make up like Mimi; she has learned how to fight it out for herself on the stage by singing in some theaters that are ideally set up for opera, and some that are not. But she has generally not been in a stadium where she cannot even see the last row. I find that, when a young singer comes back and then sings for me, when I have seen her on the stage and know what her possibilities are, I can then bring her into what I call the "mother company," in smaller roles, and begin to groom her for major roles. In this way I can see what happens to singers when there are more than five people listening to them, and I can tell whether they have the potential for becoming performers. That is where I would put my money if I had half a million dollars.

CRAWFORD

Funding the development of young artists is not a problem for the Metropolitan Opera; we can raise more money for that than we can spend appropriately. Unlike other places, we are very adequately funded. Earlier, Beverly mentioned someone who was running another American opera house who lost Domingo for four performances. Before he called you, Beverly, he called me. I succeeded in getting him a tenor who was singing at Covent Garden. The deal was that Covent Garden would release Lima for two performances in November. The Covent Garden tenor could take the Concorde and cross the Atlantic and back within seventy-two hours, but as I told him, he would miss the final dress rehearsal and he has never sung Alfredo on our stage before. I could not accept that. My point, though, is that the Metropolitan has different problems from most other houses.

ROSENTHAL

I have been going through my files of programs of opera performances given at the three main London training institutions, the Royal College of Music, the Royal Academy of Music, and the Guildhall School of Music, since the end of World War II. I think

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everybody will be surprised, as I was, to find that on the whole those students who were cast for leading roles in student performances rarely made it to major houses. Yet, if one looks among the names of the members of the chorus, one sees that many became principals in leading houses. I feel very strongly that competitions consist too often of the same clique of people, some of whom have made judging competitions into a traveling profession.

BARBIERI

I am very interested in how we should create special schools for opera students. Some of you will be familiar with Maestro Mario Labroca who founded the Center for the Education of the Lyrical Theater in Florence. The Center was a huge success, and the fact that I am still singing is entirely thanks to my training there. I entered a competition, judged by Maestro Tullio Serafin. All those who won such competitions, organized by Maestro Labroca, received scholarships lasting two years. Labroca would tour theaters listening to and selecting young singers in this way. He would also choose well-known artists and send us, as young singers, to work with them. For example, he told me to go and sing *Un Ballo in Maschera* with Beniamino Gigli, Maria Caniglia, and Gino Bechi, under the direction of Maestro de Sabata. The prima donna might or might not sing, he told me, so I should study the opera in just five days and then be prepared to face a big name like Sabata. Of course I was terrified, but Labroca told me not to be afraid, that singers have to be directed by different people.

Such training schools for singers no longer exist, but they need to be provided. As it is, the conductor alone can create or destroy a voice.

BURTON

Lord Harewood, would you have liked to have had some kind of training center at your opera house? Or do you think it better that such an activity remain separate from the opera houses?

HAREWOOD

I think it is probably best done separately. However, the Labroca School that Fedora Barbieri described to us is obviously an ideal

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arrangement, as is the one we have been hearing about in San Francisco. I hold a firm conviction that the right kind of opportunity will make the singer. There is no basic shortage of singers, and the right opportunity for many must almost certainly lie in the smaller house, and in the smaller roles initially. This is essential in a singer's early career.

I am vastly impressed by what we have been hearing about the conductor's role. The old maestri, like Tullio Serafin, obviously produced fine results. Even the bullying and haranguing of Toscanini, which of course I've only heard about from singers who experienced it—including Mariano Stabile—obviously worked. We don't see anything like it today.

This theme of opportunity—the right opportunity for the right person at the right time—is a most important one; it is what we are all looking for, and what we are all trying to offer. It is something to be infinitely careful about, something to be skilled and experienced about, and something that is all too rare.

Is There a Crisis in the Repertoire?

BURTON

I would like to ask the question, "Is there a crisis in the repertoire?" I think it is necessary, in considering the future of opera, to discuss what *kind* of opera has a future. Is there a future for revitalized performances of composers who had all stopped working by 1950, or in the case of Benjamin Britten, 1970? Or is it going to be an opera that at least mixes new works with old in a better combination that will not be dominated totally by yet another rethinking of *Madama Butterfly* or *Tosca*? New operas are being written, and some statistics would suggest that great works are still being created on an average of five or six a decade; this holds true for the twentieth century and matches the proportion of durable works created in the nineteenth century.

ROSENTHAL

Is there a crisis in the repertoire? My answer is, "No." It may seem so if one judged purely from the experience of the big international

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houses, which rely mainly on what we call "bread-and-butter operas" as the mainstay of their repertoires. Most of you here are probably familiar with Loewenberg's *Annals of Opera*, which list almost every opera written from the time of Monteverdi and Cavalli up to 1940, when Loewenberg died. Ever since my student days, I've kept a card index of what has happened in opera after 1940. I am now industriously compiling this material into a book that I hope will supplement the *Annals*. I think you will be fascinated to know that—omitting the innumerable operas written for workshops or for children's school performances during the last forty-five years—there have been more than a thousand new operas staged quite successfully throughout the world—far more in fact than during the inter-war years from 1919 to 1939. If one were to ask which two operas written in that period prior to World War II have maintained their places in the repertory, one would have to say *Turandot* and *Arabella*. Since 1945–46—in other words, since *Peter Grimes*, and hence Britten and Henze—there have been far more operas produced, written, and discussed, from composers like Britten, Tippett, and Menotti. Next season's *spielplans* have been published recently by the leading German houses; even La Scala has announced its 1985–86 season—which is unheard of!—and we see there a number of *novita assoluta*. In Germany we see premieres of operas by Reimann, and in Munich just now, during the festival, a new Sutermeister opera. In addition, the plans of all the leading houses include many first local performances of contemporary works from both sides of the Iron Curtain. All this activity surely denies any true crisis in the repertoire.

However, there is another side to the coin. Does the public show an interest in all these experimental new works? Or does the public want only stars—stars who in their turn do not want to sing or to learn contemporary works? In the last century the contemporary works were written specifically for the stars. All that has changed. Surely the solution lies in the small ensemble companies like the English National Opera, the New York City Opera, the Deutsche Oper am Rhein. That is where these new works are nurtured.

Postwar repertoires have also been enriched by a leap backward in operatic history to Monteverdi and Cavalli. Lately we have seen a great resurgence of Handel operas, probably because of an

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interest prompted through recordings of *bel canto* works. We are inclined to give much of the credit for this resurgence to such artists as Callas, Sutherland, and Sills, but on the whole, I think the interest in *bel canto*, which those people pioneered, has been significantly furthered by the recording companies producing, or the public demanding, recordings of those works. I think, too, that the much-maligned critic has played a small role in the extension of the repertoire. One has only to think how a propagandist like Desmond Shawe-Taylor, in England, was a lone voice among the critics in praise of Janáček, and the Janáček explosion in the major British recordings is phenomenal.

MCEWEN

I have to admit that I have an ominous feeling that opera as we know it is going to die in the next twenty-five years if we do not make it a more creative art form, but let it remain the museum-piece we see today. Although the figures sound impressive, I wonder how many of those new works have reached a third performance, or a third opera house? The problem, indeed, is the gap between contemporary opera and the public. The critics tend to make a mistake by maligning contemporary operas that are by and large acceptable to the public. Earlier Beverly mentioned the need to prepare both the critics and the public. The public should not have to be prepared. If you have to be "prepared" to go to a theater for an enjoyable experience, there is something wrong with that experience. I remember seeing a horrendous performance of *The Flying Dutchman* in Munich recently. It all took place in Senta's living room; sailors wearing oilskins came in through the windows and tied ropes around the furniture. I got up and left. An usher asked me, "Mr. McEwen, why are you leaving?" to which I responded, "I can't stand that ridiculous junk on stage." "But if you read the program," he said, "you will understand it." "If I have to read the program to understand it," I replied, "then I should not be here!" The point is that the press seems to dismiss operas that are too easy to understand, and believes that only operas that are terribly difficult to understand have any musical validity. Some composers, such as Benjamin Britten, have managed most successfully to hit the happy medium. I have already men-

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tioned the early performances of *Troilus and Cressida*. I remember the scolding attitude of the press, who insisted that this was an old-fashioned opera because it was written more for the voice! Yet it was a moving work, which touched the public. Had it been properly cast, I believe it could have gone to the American public and been well received.

I am very worried about this gap between contemporary opera and the public, and I think that this meeting should make some statement about how we are going to bridge that chasm between new operatic art forms and public acceptance. All we have had to say once again is how much of a difference there is between selling a *Butterfly* and selling a *Billy Budd*. It is a most extraordinary fact that I have generous, wealthy people who will give me money for new works. There are even some people who will give money only for new works, some who will make grants only for educational activities. But where *are* those new works? Where am I going to find a composer today who is not intimidated by opera?

BURTON

Perhaps one must consider Ann Getty's warning that opera is going to be the equivalent of poetry's epic; in other words, a form that is no longer needed. This seems unlikely, yet the public does not gather in droves to attend opera. I understand, however, that some houses were full for the recent Philip Glass production. There may, in fact, be different publics for different works; the gap may not be universal. Moreover, it may change in size according to which public you are measuring. I would like to ask Maestro Menotti, who is currently the most prolific of the opera composers in this room, if he could give us the benefit of his opinion on these matters.

MENOTTI

As you all know, for a composer to become respectable he must first die! I have the disadvantage of being alive, and I am in no hurry to achieve such unenviable respectability. However, I think composers of opera have a great problem. Although people think of me as successful, I am really a rather bitter and disappointed composer, as was Benjamin Britten. I was very surprised when I

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learned what a bitter man Britten was. One of the reasons for our bitterness is that our operas, whether successful or not, are quickly discarded. We have no homes.

In the old days, composers like Puccini and Verdi had their own houses. I started out with a grand home—La Scala. All my new operas were performed there until the administration changed and I was thrown out. I found a home in Trieste, where every opera of mine was performed and sometimes repeated the next season; the administration changed and I was forgotten. I came to the New York City Opera; once again, the administration changed and I was overlooked. For fifteen years I forbade people to play a note of my music! Finally, I followed the example of Britten and founded my own home, my festival. I decided that I might as well use my festival to experiment with my own operas. In this way I have a home that I have built myself.

We composers cannot just drift from one opera house to another; we need the support of one house that will say, "Menotti, you are *our* composer. We bank on you." A house must decide, however, if the composer is worth its while. But generally we composers have no home—we are just picked up, tried, and thrown away, regardless of whether our operas are successful or not.

BURTON

Mr. Sallinen does have a home, I believe! Aulis Sallinen, you have now been working for fifteen years for the Finnish company. Tell us your reactions to this theme.

SALLINEN

It is clear how important and fundamental is the composer's role; it is even clearer that if opera directors do not want to work in mausoleums and museums in the future there must be provision for new pieces in the repertoire, because, if there is no new music, opera as an art form will come to an end. Composers should also work in different parts of the world. Compositions are often commissioned for patriotic or sometimes international reasons, but occasionally you find a sponsor who genuinely desires new

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music, new challenges. It is very exciting for a composer to write for such a house.

The title of this discussion has been "Is there a crisis in the repertoire?" I would like to change that to "Will there be a crisis?" I would say that there has always been a crisis in repertoire, because I do not think that opera directors face a more difficult situation today than they did a hundred years ago. Even then there were certainly composers and pieces that gave the singers and the opera directors problems. If we ask where those countless symphonies are that have been written over the centuries, we find them in the garbage of history. I may be contradicting myself, but there is no crisis in the repertoire. We are all enjoying the fruits of natural selection. We have only the pearls left.

I would also like to point out that composing, and creative work in general, is of a highly individual character, and is not a technique to be "mastered," as some have suggested. I do not believe in those calculating composers who write arias that appeal only to elderly ladies, or who create for specific audiences. Today's composers, who can write in different styles from baroque to contemporary, have to make the practical decision: for whom do they write their music? Do they write for a group of bored and unreceptive critics? Do they write for their colleagues, perhaps especially for their younger colleagues, just to show they are still young, as I suppose Stravinsky did? In my country, Finland, about sixty thousand tickets are sold at the Savonlinna Festival every summer—this in a country with a population only half that of London, less than five million people. Who are these people we call "the public"? How old are they? What do they do? If I were to make myself select the people for whom I write my music, I would find it impossible. There is only one critic a composer can listen to and that is himself. Sometimes his taste may correspond with the taste of the public, and he then is a success. This is not merely a stylistic question; it is supremely important that the composer have an artistic message. While it is true that the composer must always remember his public, he must never let the public come between him and his work: that would be commercialism. Frank Martin once said that he had tried to write a piece specifically for the public; it was a failure. He did his best work when he wrote for himself.

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MENOTTI

I agree that people are always talking about writing for the public, and every composer asks himself the question, "Who am I writing for?" One writes for what is noblest in the collective unconscious. The composer must appeal to the collective unconscious of the public—that is the great secret.

PRINCE

I read Mr. Rosenthal's *Opera* magazine assiduously, and one of its most interesting aspects, I find, is its numerous reviews of new operas. I never see those operas; I read about them hungrily, and they evaporate. I have heard Mr. Sallinen say that we have been left with the "pearls," with only the best. I suspect, however, we have been left with the best only because there was always a structure in place that allowed us to see and select from the entire spectrum. One might find parallels today in something as commercial as film. We see all kinds of films: the bad, the mediocre, the good, the best. The latter will live on into the future. This habit of ours of seeing, accepting, rejecting, or finally celebrating a particular piece of work has no equivalent in opera today.

I had thought you might not accept my premise that there cannot be a contemporary art form without a substantial proportion of contemporary works in the repertoire, but to my amazement I seem to have your agreement. Since we seem to have consensus, should we not talk about some practical ways to give life to that missing structure?

I don't think there is anything like the proportion of indifference on the part of the audience to really exciting theater that is to be inferred from the fact that they are not attending new operas. Consider for a moment the history of the opera *Willie Stark*, which Carlisle Floyd wrote over a period of three years. He then brought it to me and we worked on it for another two-and-a-half years. We performed it in Houston, although it was still forty-five minutes too long. Nevertheless, anybody who has spent three years working on an opera has the right to see everything that he feels has true quality. We had argued over the quality or redundancy of scenes many times during the two-and-a-half years we collaborated, but Floyd still had the right to see three hours of opera on that stage.

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We decided that the piece would play for two weeks in Houston, then another two weeks at the Kennedy Center in Washington. Slowly but surely, we felt, it would take its final shape. Ultimately we would tape it for television.

The New York Times sent its first-string critic to the Houston opening, which was the first public showing. The Houston Chorus, good and cooperative singers, is comprised of secretaries and business people, all of whom have other lives but converge at night to rehearse. Obviously, we could only have a limited number of dress rehearsals and a limited number of orchestra rehearsals. We were not permitted a single performance in front of an audience before the critics descended on us. *The New York Times* and *Time* magazine tore the work apart. It was absolutely destroyed. So we cut it and moved on to Washington, where it was much more favorably received. We shortened it still more and put it on television, and the reviews for *Willie Stark* were uniformly favorable—simply wonderful! It is now three-and-a-half or four years later, and there is going to be another performance late this summer. I certainly wish it well. But I do know one thing: the only reason there will be another production of this opera is that the television tape has been shown every fall for three consecutive years on "Great Performances" at the beginning of the public television season. The television critics restored it to life after the opera critics had murdered it. From my point of view, this experience has been immensely frustrating, and I think the issue we ought to be addressing is how we can devise a practical program to make it possible for us to see all the newest operas. At the moment, they are not accessible to us because there is no structure that allows us to accept, reject, or celebrate!

BURTON

Do you have in mind some kind of non-commercial video recording library?

PRINCE

That is certainly a most interesting idea, which might open our eyes to the possibility of staging those productions on the opera stages. Of course, I realize there are economic strictures, which present enormous problems. I think it would be ideal to have a fund to

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allow people to see new performances. Obviously, taping would be a much easier process, and it is a terrific idea—the kind of suggestion we should be hearing more of.

So our search must be not only for new singers but also for new works. Throughout history the critics have savaged great works—even the "pearls" may have been reviled the first time around. The case of film is not an exact parallel either. Film is a contemporary art form; films may get bad reviews, but people rush to see them anyway. There seems to be no relationship between how a film is reviewed and how well it is received by an audience.

MENOTTI

A parallel example is Samuel Barber's work, which was absolutely roasted by everybody, and he never got over that. It was subsequently revived in a different place, by the Juilliard, and got wonderful reviews.

SMITH

Maestro Menotti's earlier comment about composers needing a home is a point that must be made very strongly. In the last fifty years, at least in the United States, the audiences for new opera have been lured away by a combination of factors that include the difficulties posed by certain contemporary operas, the cult of the "big star," and the revival of certain older operatic forms such as *bel canto*. In order to lure them back again, I suggest you *do* have to educate them. There ought to be a program for educating people to appreciate the new, so that they will come to the opera houses to hear contemporary works just as they come for a *Bohème* or a *Tosca*.

I am encouraged that this kind of program is being run to some extent in the United States. A home is being created for the composer in several of our smaller companies. For instance, the Minnesota Opera has long been the home of Dominick Argento, who lives there and is virtually Minnesota's state composer. Every work he premieres in Minnesota, therefore, is accepted as the work of a "native son," and is received in a much warmer way than it would be if he were totally unknown to the Minneapolis–St. Paul audiences. Similarly, a composer who lives in Minnesota, but has

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worked with the St. Louis Opera, Stephen Paulus, has had several of his works performed in St. Louis, so that now St. Louis audiences accept him as part of the structure of their opera. Of course the classic example is one that I think is atypical, because the composer in that case is married to the opera's general director, and that is Thea Musgrave of the Virginia Opera Company. I attended the opening of her latest opera, based on the biography of Harriet Tubman, a very famous nineteenth-century black woman who ran the "underground railroad" to the North, which helped so many blacks escape from the South. This world premiere was given in Norfolk, the home of the Virginia Opera Company. I was fascinated to find that the opening-night crowd was not what you would expect to find, being composed of the Company's supporters and supporters of Norfolk's artistic endeavors, as well as opera lovers. They all backed Thea Musgrave completely, because she had lived there for years. They like her, and so they were willing to listen to a kind of music that, if it were written by somebody with another name, they would not have tolerated for ten minutes. They were not only listening, they were cheering—a standing ovation! How can that be explained? Precisely because this woman does have a home.

WEIDENFELD

One of the regrettable developments has been that many of the great traditional festivals have evolved into cultural potpourris. The "Salzburg" of today is hardly the "Salzburg of Reinhardt and Hofmansthal." If there were festivals devoted to a particular school of opera or orchestral music they could become very important, and I believe the public would attend.

Let me add one brief word on education and the idea of preparing audiences for the first hearing: I think it is not nearly so important as preparing them for the second and third hearings. Education is essential to opera. The very structure of opera, the context in which it was written, must be conveyed. In other words, the *ideal* opera-goer should also be an avid student of cultural history.

Finally, is there some scope for widening the experimental areas of music drama by commissioning beyond the confines of the

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opera stage—for example, by staging special events and openings, mixing theater and opera rather in the manner of *Ariadne*?

MENOTTI

You have not touched upon the problem of singers. Unfortunately, when our operas are given in a major opera house, we can get only second-class singers because the famous stars are not prepared to learn new major roles. I have been lucky enough to have Beverly, and more recently Katia Ricciarelli, but those were rare occasions. Now I think I am lucky to have commissioned Domingo to do an opera, but again, as the poor composer, I am in a very difficult position because several opera houses say they will stage the opera *only* if Domingo can find the time to perform. My opera is now tied to Domingo. Should we wait for the great stars, or should we work only with second-class singers? The managers should try to encourage famous singers to sing new works; you cannot bring a new work to the Metropolitan with second-class singers. It is most unfortunate to have the success of one's work depend on a busy star!

GOMEZ

I want to make one point about modern composers and their exposure on television. When a traditional opera is shown on television—a *Rigoletto* or a *Traviata*—it must be presented in such a way as to make the story readily understood by the audience. The moment a contemporary opera is introduced, it breaks with tradition, even if there is a traditional form of opera presentation with singers, a chorus, and an orchestra who will tell the story. When we see this on television we are struck by the difference between the presentation of the traditional and the modern.

The technological revolution—a fact of life—offers to producers not only of traditional programs but also of modern ones an entirely new concept of music. It opens new possibilities, enables more intimate situations to be created, greater expression of the dramatic moments. Television presentation enables the audience to establish a more intimate contact with the performers by means of sound, light, the camera, and these techniques influence the traditional approach to the presentation of opera.

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I believe that modern composers should take these facts into account, as it is by virtue of technology that music of high quality can be brought to the public via television. I also believe that, in order to make use of the technical advantages and the dramatic possibilities, an opera's length is of great importance. A traditional opera lasts from two-and-a-half to three hours. This is altogether too long for television purposes, where commercial factors must be taken into account. For these reasons I believe that, whereas it is extremely difficult to modify and condense a traditional opera, contemporary composers should consider these issues when they are writing a new opera, working within the constrictions as a challenge. It is only through seeing and hearing these new works performed that an audience will grow to appreciate the musical qualities of contemporary opera, and the size of the public reached on television is infinitely larger than the number of people who would attend a modern opera at a theater.

DIAMAND

Maestro Menotti suggests that opera directors should encourage prominent singers to take part in new works; this might attract the audiences. Patrick Smith has just told us that contemporary opera is often received enthusiastically in the United States. Italo Gomez advises today's opera composers to have television in mind, to write short, concise works, fit to be televised. No doubt, each of them has a valid point. However, one recipe to cure *all* the symptoms of repertoire malaise is not enough, as the malaise manifests itself in many different ways.

What I would like to stress is that the individual who carries the *artistic* responsibility for a theater—whether general manager or music director—should do what he or she believes to be artistically necessary, useful, important, "right" for the theater, irrespective of "the public." Let us be careful when using the term "the public." Undoubtedly there is an infinitely larger public for *Bohème* and *Butterfly* than for contemporary opera; yet there is also an infinitely larger public for *Cats*, or any other successful musical, than there is even for *Bohème* and *Butterfly*. In some cases, though not necessarily in all, there exists a limited public not only for contemporary works but also for unknown works.

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When Fritz Busch and Carl Ebert wanted to—and indeed did—add *Così fan tutte* to the Glyndebourne repertoire in 1934 or 1935, it was not only their landlord, John Christie, who feared that "the public" would not come. *Pelléas et Mélisande* is not at home even at the most important houses in the non-French countries. *Khovantschina,* if I am not mistaken, still expects its first performance in Vienna. Janáček's operas have only very recently, on a very small basis, conquered the repertoire of some houses.

It should not be always and only the "capacity audiences" to which opera houses cater. To widen the horizon of those comparatively few who are interested—to stimulate them, challenge them—to satisfy what is nowadays called an "elitist" audience is, in my view, as important and imperative a task as to provide the bread-and-butter repertoire that fills the house.

I would like to ask, if I may, a question of George Weidenfeld. Within the confines of his own art form I am sure he must be confronted with the question of sometimes publishing works that address themselves only to a limited public. What are a publisher's criteria? Is he—should we—be only concerned that quantity take precedence over quality in our presentation? We take it for granted that television and other media need maximum audiences, but this must not blur our sense of responsibility to cater also to smaller audiences.

WEIDENFELD

The parallel is valid. If you believe in a literary work of art, then you feel you can make it one of your few "loss leaders," and you do it with the knowledge that you will then use every conceivable means of creating a *raison d'être* for more and more people to read it, whether by means of an anniversary, a centenary, or something that suddenly hits a nerve today.

SÖDERSTRÖM-OLOW

In my own country I am looked upon either as a cultural worker or a missionary. I have that reputation because when I first came to opera we had no audience, and our government decreed that we would get our subsidy only if we could fill the house to 85 percent. As a consequence, we all became involved in a major program to

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reach out to the audience, and I have never stopped trying to do that. Our one remaining problem is that in Stockholm, ever since the seventies, we have not had enough seats for opera.

When I was in Lapland recently, teaching young opera singers, I was officially criticized in one of the newspapers for perpetrating an art form that was "only for rich people with a good education," and so forth. I contacted the journalist who wrote this and asked him, "What is your problem? We have given you opera in Lapland; have you been to any performances?" "Yes," he said, "I went to Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice,* but I didn't understand anything." Then we had a long conversation about how to help people who have never been to an opera before. Opera does indeed need marketing. As I said to that journalist, "If your local radio station played the tunes of this opera every day, by the end of the week you would have recognized them, would you not?" and he agreed that that would have helped him. I mention this because I think we harm contemporary music by performing it just because we think we have to. Nobody understands it, and we are forced to take it off after two performances as though we were ashamed of it. It is not a question of educating the audiences but of giving them a bit of help to recognize what is going on. I remember the work we did with the Janáček series before the opening night. Members of the audience were invited to meet the artists and the conductor, and we played parts of the opera and described what was happening; the audience really appreciated that experience. Nevertheless, when we stage Janáček today people still call his work "modern," although it was composed in 1926.

I have been accustomed to think of successful operas as those where the audience goes home humming the tunes, but the drama is equally important. Might not the drama be the element that catches people's attention so that they wish to see the work again? Aulis Sallinen's operas are a good example of that combination of drama and music. His work reaches the audience, even if its members do not understand a word of Finnish! The most moving experience of my career was our performance of Gian Carlo Menotti's *Consul* at the Royal Opera in Stockholm: for the first time in my life, there was an actual scene that broke your heart! The performers were so involved in the drama that the audience could identify with what was happening on the stage. Another

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opera with that kind of strength was *Aniara*, in which the world was going to pieces, and one actually felt there was a possibility that we all might have to be evacuated from Earth to Mars in a few years' time. I believe that was the only truly successful Swedish opera ever composed; it ran for over a hundred-and-twenty performances. The audience took those scenes to their hearts, and they absorbed the music. If I had half a million dollars, I would give it to a librettist, because so very often nowadays we perform operas with a theme that fails to move us at all. If we had more scenes that profoundly stirred our feelings, then perhaps the composer would also gain.

BANFIELD

I would like to answer Italo Gomez, who has suggested that composers of today should accommodate the demands of television. I think this disregards the needs of the composer. Certainly I am the least prolific composer of those gathered here, partly because I have been the director of a theater for the last fourteen years, which means I do not have much time, but I believe the composer should fulfill his soul as well as reach his audience. He cannot do this if he is limited by time restrictions. Wagner's tetralogy would never have been written under such terms.

BURTON

If Harold Prince had had the chance to influence Richard Strauss on *Rosenkavalier*, I think a few sections here and there might have been cut.

BANFIELD

We do that anyway. The composer should write all that he feels, for if he restricts himself he will not be sincere!

BURTON

I believe Mr. Gomez was referring to writing a fresh work, whether for film or television. The length might then be considered in terms of what professionals think of as "TV time," which is not the same as "theater time." Everything happens faster—it's more concen-

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trated, and the points are made more quickly. The public is used to receiving ideas quickly through commercials and news bulletins.

BANFIELD

I maintain that the composer should write freely.

BURTON

I took nourishment from George Weidenfeld's ideas for some kind of mixed-media event that would involve television—either as the prime or secondary mover. As a television practitioner, I would have to say that I prefer the medium of film, because the works of Ingmar Bergman, Jean-Pierre Ponnelle, Götz Friedrich, and more recently Francesco Rosi with *Carmen*, show us the exciting possibilities for operatic art in a film format, which has only just begun to be explored. I would hope very much that Mr. Sallinen, and of course Maestro Menotti, who virtually invented television opera, will show us that television can be an equally effective medium for lyrical musical expression. The problem remains, though, of why so few contemporary works are staged.

MOSER

Our program planners begin with a list of some forty established masterpieces, adding a certain number of pieces each year that are marginal, and some contemporary works. We do stage a number of the latter, but not enough. I have a practical suggestion to make with this hypothetical half a million hovering over us. Why do we not stage more contemporary pieces? The reason is that although we can nearly always fill the house the first time around we cannot sell tickets the following season when the pieces are revived. We have staged all of Tippett's operas that we commissioned, and we shall certainly fill the house with Stockhausen's and Sallinen's works. The problem comes with the revivals, and this takes me back to Harold Prince's very interesting question of whether there is any way in which money could be found to stage revivals of commissioned works in other opera houses. Could a fund be set up to enable revivals to be staged in other houses? Second, and even more important, we know that public interest is fostered through recordings—sound or video—but we can never persuade the

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recording companies to produce contemporary works, with the exception of Tippett. If the money could be found to subsidize sound and video recordings of contemporary works that have already had exposure in an opera house, I think the scene would change.

Producer Power

PRINCE

Earlier I said that I had "lucked out" when I discovered that the only way I could give a production a secure stand was to have a set that artists who arrive four days before the opening could not anticipate. What I actually meant was that I greatly resent the arrival of star singers four or five days before we perform in front of an audience, and many weeks after I have begun working with the chorus and the *comprimarios*. I also pointed out, with the extreme example of *Tosca* being performed, let us say, in a bathroom, that such an aggressive need to wrench these works out of their placid settings is only the director's desire to express himself, under circumstances that are less than ideal. Let me say what I think the ideal circumstances would be. We need new material to work on, so that we have not only a steady diet of the bread-and-butter operas, but also a revival of works that are less often seen, as well as new operas. We also need adequate rehearsal periods. I have never dreamed that people would say to me, "In our view you have two-and-a-half weeks with the chorus and everyone else involved, and you will deliver that opera in that time." I have never confined myself to two-and-a-half weeks, although I have prepared one opera in three weeks and the rest in four, or sometimes five. I think that ultimately we deserve an audience and a preview before the opening night. To raise the quality as high as it should be, we ought to be able to perform before an audience before we play in front of the critics. If you are going to use world-class opera stars, they ought to be available for the entire rehearsal period. It is therefore our responsibility to refuse to direct the opera unless the star is delivered under our conditions. I certainly have not lived up to that responsibility.

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We do need to make the texts more dynamic again, because they have been seen so often and need to be infused with new life, new blood. We are also forced to work too hard and too quickly to present an opera, and we thus lose the chance to appraise it more honestly and perform it as it was intended to be presented. We simply do not develop good working relationships with the artists.

Finally, much has been said about the conductor. I have been very lucky. I started very early with Julius Rudel who introduced me to this opera game some years ago. Julius and I staged an opera together, and I found that relationship marvelous. I have since achieved it with a few other conductors, but with Julius it began on the first day of production. We had the most efficient kind of thinking and working collaboration.

We deserve the star at the first day of rehearsal, and we certainly deserve the maestro and the director to be in close collaboration early on, long before the rehearsals start.

MILLER

No matter what sort of cast you have, some members are less than ideal—some are less than cooperative, and some are less than talented! Those are problems one has anywhere. Making allowances for that, at the Scottish Opera, when I worked at the English National for John Cox, at Kent Opera, and at St. Louis, I never confronted anything but totally favorable circumstances. That, I think, has partly to do with the fact that these institutions were not committed to the notion of opera as a major, glamorous enterprise involving a lot of performers who had to be delivered to the opera house in vans with slanted ramps that are let down by the stage door. I have worked with people I've been able to talk to from the first day, and I haven't had to put on polarized spectacles in order to see them through the glare of their reputations. Once you commit yourself to that sort of world, production and design become instruments of warfare against the cast rather than a basis for cooperation.

My first consideration is always what, in fact, the relationship of the producer and the director is to the text, and what, therefore, their notion of authenticity is. The idea seems to be that a work's authenticity is endangered because the producer or the director

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might interpose some sort of personal screen that will prevent the work from transmitting itself directly to the audience. This belief derives from two fundamental misconceptions about the nature of the performing arts. First, there is the idea that there exists a level of meaning that is fixed when a work leaves the composer's hand, and that as long as one can identify that determinant level of meaning in the production it must be preserved. It follows, then, that there is a canonical performance towards which the cast must grope, and which, when attained, must remain fixed for all time.

I find this view of the performing arts nonsensical. The arts are emergent, not static, containing properties that cannot be foreseen. People suggest that the best authority on the work is the composer himself. T.S. Eliot, perhaps one of the greatest geniuses in this area, who was himself both a writer and a critic, recognized that the author or composer is not necessarily the best authority on his own meanings. This is not to say that he is slipshod, or does not understand his meaning, but simply that no writer, no author, no composer has total access to all his own meanings. This is surely evident in everyday life; at times everyone needs an objective perspective on his actions. The producer can provide this insight. He is the bystander, the intelligent critic who is in a position, sometimes, to identify meanings that were not directly accessible to the composer, and to extract new meanings with the passing of time. Now this may sound as if I am writing a "vandal's charter," saying that the work can be expanded indefinitely since the meanings are, in fact, inchoate, and depend upon the interpretations of the producer, the director, and the conductor, rather than the composer. I am not saying that. I am a great advocate of the American critic E.D. Hirsch's ideas about there being a determinancy of meaning that is partly imposed by the author. The composer did not supply simply a Rorschach ink blot in which an infinite series of meanings can be identified or projected. Nevertheless, I think it becomes extremely difficult to prescribe *a priori* a specific formula consistent with a range of meanings for a particular work. Imagine Peter Brook telling you in advance that he intended to set *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in a whitewashed gymnasium with everyone on trapezes and the actors juggling plates to represent the supernatural fairies! As a policy statement, it would have seemed improbable—even philistine. Retrospec-

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tively, it seems totally consistent with the range of meanings that Shakespeare intended, even though he could not have anticipated that particular interpretation.

I think that the producer's relationship to a text is very similar to the relationship of the Supreme Court to the Constitution. The writers of a constitution, or the writers of a text or a score, set general policies, which they hope will accommodate all foreseeable future contingencies. However, there is no possible way of anticipating every contingency, so the result is that, when you write a constitution, you allow for the possibility of a series of amendments. This is what we see in the processes of modern theater and modern opera: successive amendments to a constitution inherited from the past. One constantly has to make allowances for modern sensibilities, for unforeseeable changes in the perceptions of the modern audience.

I should like to conclude with one further model. As a biologist, I have always been struck by a fundamental distinction in the development of an organism—a distinction used since the 1920s—between the genotype and the phenotype. What biologists mean by that is the following: as creatures, we inherit at conception a package of genetic instructions that define us as a species. These instructions also define various characteristics such as hair color, height, weight, skin color, and so on. The genotype, however, is not a preemptively determined set of instructions. The actual outcome is, it turns out, partly the result of the environment within which the package develops. Therefore, the phenotype, the actual shape that a particular body or form takes, is to a certain degree determined by the environment in which it finds itself.

In the same way a score inherited from the past is a package of genetic instructions—a genotype—with unforeseeable possibilities of phenotypic expression according to the cultural environment in which it exists. There is no possible way, for example, that Mozart could have foreseen the fact that his own creative genotype would outlive his time. Composers and writers working before about 1850 had little reason to suspect that the future would be any different from the past, or that their work would pass into a cultural environment very different from their own. History was relatively stable then. Now it is not so, and therefore the future of any particular work cannot be foreseen by any of us here.

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BURTON

Despite my enormous admiration for Peter Brook's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I did think he subscribed to the "vandal's charter" when he took it upon himself to decide how Bizet ought to have written *Carmen*—although I seem to find myself in the minority. Most people whose opinions I respect have enjoyed the "Peter Brook *Carmen*," as it has come to be known. However, the notion that Bizet did not really know what he wanted to write about because he was writing in a conventional theatrical system, and that only Peter Brook and Marius Constant have found the right way to orchestrate it, did strike me as a piece of vandalism that was not justifiable except as a spectacle, albeit a spectacle that enthralled people—particularly young people—and did conceivably throw some new light on the opera *Carmen*. There is more than one way to see the producer's position, although Jonathan Miller has made a marvelous case for the producer's revitalizing and rethinking all the operatic repertoire.

MENOTTI

It is true that a piece is never in itself a complete creation. While the interpretations of the "Fifth Symphony" by von Karajan, Toscanini, and Bruno Walter are all different, the main intent remains. When I produce my own operas, I never repeat myself. Every time I stage *The Medium* or *The Consul*, I discover new things to change. Nevertheless, the stage director must bear in mind that he is an interpreter, not a creator; otherwise he should write his own opera. I was very amused once, when I was invited to be a guest on a French television program called, "L'Invité du Dimanche." Guests were free to invite anybody they wanted, so I invited Patrice Chéreau and Ionesco, knowing that they admired each other very much. It was an amusing experience: Chéreau said to Ionesco, "You know, I admire you very much. You are a wonderful playwright." Ionesco responded, "Thank you. I also hear that you are an outstanding stage director, and that you've staged most impressive productions." Chéreau continued, "As a matter of fact, I intend to stage one of your plays next season." "Please don't touch my plays," said Ionesco, "I admire you very much, but leave

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my plays alone!" Chéreau was shocked by that, but as far as I know he left Ionesco's plays alone.

BURTON

I am surprised that Ionesco would not want Chéreau to produce his plays because I think Chéreau has proven, in opera at any rate, to be an interpreter of genius who is close to being creative because he can make singers act so marvelously. This aspect, namely, the role of the producer in bringing out the drama inherent in every opera, was touched on by neither Mr. Prince nor Mr. Miller. It involves working closely with the singers, which is the corollary of the conductor's close working on the notes. It seems to me that the role of the producer—and I have seen this with John Cox and Elisabeth Söderström working together on Strauss operas at Glyndebourne—is absolutely paramount in creating a work of art that is a *Gesamtkunstwerk* and not merely singing with a little primitive acting thrown in. I would hope that one scheme we might consider is how to get more trained theater producers to work in the field of opera. I would like to ask whether it is necessary for a theater producer to be able to read music. Jonathan Miller does not actually read music freely in the way that most of you around this table do. He does not claim to be a musician at all.

MENOTTI

In my opinion an opera director must be very musical. I am often shocked when I hear the music saying "move," and the person singing is standing still. The music may say "stand still," while the performer is running all over the stage. If you are a musician, that lack of understanding hurts because the music is a part of the stage direction.

MILLER

Since a musical composition is never fixed and determinate, I do not think that musical dyslexia is necessarily a sign of musical insensitivity. I cannot *read* music, but I know what it means, although that is a negotiable matter. Of course there are emphases, tones, and changes in the music, and someone who feels and likes music would naturally direct the action accordingly. As a musically

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illiterate director, I manage to do that perfectly well. I emphasized the fact that it was not a case of "anything goes" with the producer; it was not a Rorschach ink blot, but a matter of interpretation, and I believe that interpretation is itself a creative art.

SALLINEN

To be able to read music and to be musical are two distinctly different abilities. A musical person never works against the score, and I think this is a most important point. As I am quite sure that the only salvation for future opera is in ensemble opera, I agree that the role of the producer is becoming more and more important. Indeed, the producer is a creative artist. He must have more power than he has today. Once you have chosen the producer, your final decisions are made.

COX

Our problem, as interpreters, would appear to be how to reconcile being honest to a work of art with our natural tendency, as artists, to wish to be original.

The question, then, is how to be original, while at the same time reaching new audiences—audiences that perhaps already await us. Indeed the audience for opera *is* expanding; we have seen major "pop" artists use operatic raw material to create successful new recordings. We have only to think of the major popularizations of Gilbert and Sullivan and others. Finally, I was sorry to hear such disapproval voiced about Peter Brook's *Carmen*. With that sort of reception, how are we to secure the originality we need to cause the operatic art form to survive and prosper in the twenty-first century? As mentioned earlier, from the musical standpoint, we tend to treat opera as a museum form. The director faces great problems if he wishes to alter the music in any way. He may be allowed, perhaps, in consultation with the conductor, to make a few cuts—especially if it is recitative. However, if there is any question of manipulating the basic musical material, the idea is out.

At the same time, original work is the rare exception. One hundred and fifty years ago, Rossini was approached at three

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weeks' notice by the City of Venice to write a new opera for *Carnevale*, because a German composer had broken his contract. One hundred and fifty years later, any manager who commissioned a new opera for a popular occasion would be considered mad. This, however, is not entirely the fault of the manager. Many composers have deserted the popular language of the theater to write esoterically for one another. This leaves the field completely open to the director in the search for originality. At the moment, we directors and designers have the field to ourselves, and we must not forget that the situation is not going to change until composers come back into the theater with the works for our time, which are original, but also accessible. Until then we shall continue to recycle the same thirty standard operas, which circle the globe over and over again, and we shall doubtless continue to indulge in these outré interpretations that are making the whole question of operatic staging such a critical matter today. If we were to desist, the whole species "opera" would fossilize.

RUDEL

I think there is nothing wrong with the constant reexamination of great works. We return again and again to see great works of art in the fine arts museums. As Jonathan Miller has said, a work may always be brought back with new insight, or with relevance for our time, provided we insist that it remain true, to the best of our knowledge, to the original intent of the composer.

In a sense, now, I have to take up the cudgel for the opera star. He is clever enough to come in on two days' notice. He does not need any more time for rehearsal; that would be a waste of his time. The singer who has three weeks of rehearsal may not give any more in terms of interpretation in the long run.

Then there are the works that are truly vandalized; here, a question of responsibility arises. First of all, there is the responsibility to the older works, which have need of reexamination because there is always a new generation coming along that has not yet seen or heard them. This generation is entitled to hear Mozart as Mozart is traditionally performed. However, interpretations of works with a certain mood and a certain history, which arbitrarily turn all that around, illuminate nothing. In a sense the

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irresponsibility goes even further, because not only does the director force his initial cast to perform his interpretation, and the house to accept it, but the impresario gets stuck with the production. He now has two choices: either to take it off the boards or to foist it on the public for additional seasons to recoup the costs of production. Sometimes I think this sort of scandalous interpretation is encouraged because it gives the press something to write about. Journalists are always more willing to write about something outrageous than about a good, honest production.

MOSER

I fully agree with the need to reexamine and reinterpret even the great masterpieces. The occasions on which I have left the opera house outraged have nearly all been, to my mind, when the outrage is the fault of the designer rather than the producer. So, how should the designer be chosen? By the head of the opera house, by the conductor, or by the producer? Second, when the designer has been chosen, how final should his or her power be? I rather wonder whether, in the eyes of the producer, designers have too much power. In my opinion they do. They too often produce ludicrous designs, even for rather carefully thought-out productions. Furthermore, I blame the designers above anyone else for the financial production problems many opera houses are experiencing. How can one control that? Is there any way that designers can be more disciplined? If so, by whom? Third, we in the opera world seem to be rather short of distinguished and economically minded designers. Is there anything that could be done, with this hovering half a million, to produce a new era of cost-conscious yet inventive designers?

COX

The one person able to choose the designer is the director. A production requires the marriage of those two talents. Of course, the management can advise or even recommend until agreement is reached. Thereafter, it is the absolute responsibility of management to control the production team financially.

MILLER

I personally design every single thing in my productions, more or less in conjunction with my designer. My designers are the

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engineers who execute my ideas. They know what I want and have the responsibility for everything that appears on the stage, both from the point of view of production and cost, and of course appearance. I absolutely agree that there are moments when a designer and producer do collude in a disastrous attack on opera. I have seen a great many of these fractured productions. Yet, there is never a case where a designer comes in and designs a production that the producer abjectly accepts. He designs with his producer, and always in collaboration with management. When I worked for George Harewood, he knew at every moment what I was doing and what my designers were doing. It was checked at each stage from a budgetary and from an aesthetic point of view. I know perfectly well that, if he had ever objected to what my designer and I were doing, the matter would have been discussed and I would perhaps have been deflected from my original scheme. That is one of the risks of being a producer, but it is one you are aware of in advance.

WAGNER-PASQUIER

I want to come back to Mr. Prince's remarks. He spoke about the organization and the management of the house, but that has nothing to do with the producer's power. What is that power? As soon as someone is chosen, we know what to expect. We know his personal style. Everybody screams about what Ken Russell does in Vienna; we have all seen his films. You know that if you engage him you have to expect something like that; otherwise you should choose someone else. The same is true of designers.

BURTON

Why is it that we do not bring many more outstanding painters into the theater? The example of David Hockney seems to be so strong that one desires to return to the Diaghilev productions, where people like Bakst and Goncharova were designing. I would love to see more "producer power" deployed in hiring great painters to work with them.

MILLER

There have been only a very few occasions when the work of a painter could be accommodated to stage design. Painters tend to

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work in the medium of the canvas, where the exclusive direction of the gaze is toward the object itself, so that people performing in front of it become a distraction. Although Picasso designed a drape for certain of the ballet sequences in *The Parade*, an extremely eccentric work, there really has never been an instance where a great painter could be assimilated into the theater; he will almost always create with a view toward his work being exhibited after the close of the production, and that is absolute catastrophe!

BARBIERI

I feel very strongly that when the opera director is in charge, he can do whatever he likes. I know this from experience. When I was singing *Rigoletto* under the direction of Yuri Ljubimov in Florence, two other artists refused to sing because they said the production was a scandal. In fact it was a scandal—the public booed! I believe one has to remain faithful to the original.

ASKONAS-SHEPHERD

We are talking about opera here rather than anything else. Have we forgotten the conductor? Isn't the conductor's role to safeguard the work and talk to his producer? Isn't it actually the conductor who should guide one? But perhaps my opinion is a little old-fashioned. I remember the Edinburgh *Carmen*, when there were get-togethers between Piero Faggioni and Claudio Abbado. One day Claudio left in the middle of rehearsal and went to his dressing room, white and trembling. I said, "I don't understand. You are the conductor! Tell him what you feel, tell him you don't want the main artists in the back as they can't be heard!" But he wouldn't do that, and explained that the producer was as much an artistic entity as the conductor and therefore could not be interfered with. Here lies the problem.

Modern Technology and Opera

BURTON

We live in an age where technology plays an increasingly large part in our daily lives. Will the world of opera, too, be transformed

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dramatically within the next decade through technology? While the arts of composing, of singing, of acting cannot be computerized, the whole labor-intensive event of an operatic production seems susceptible to some kinds of modern intervention, such as the use of a computer for lighting design. Once one has prepared one's lighting on the computer, would it not be possible for this plan to be transferred successfully from one theater to another? Could a particular designer's lighting become, in fact, something one could acquire in the way that we now acquire sets from certain productions in other countries, other continents? Perhaps more significant for day-to-day performance, could microphone technique conceivably do away with the problem of the small voice? Shall we eventually become so accustomed to the sound of music distributed through loudspeakers that we are able to accept amplified sound even within a theater, as well as in the open, or will this still be anathema to most artists? Will box office activities be transformed through some sort of mechanization or computerization? Would it be helpful to have a world register of operas, and artists' availability, an operatic data bank, in effect, controlled from some central place?

PRINCE

I do not look on live music theater as an invitation to join the computer age. There is no question that lighting systems are now accommodated by computer, but I have yet to know of a musical piece that has not had a sudden blackout because the computer refused to behave. From the very first dress rehearsal of *Evita*, every projection fell into place as it should, and that has held true for the last eight years. Nothing has ever gone wrong. I think projection belongs in *Evita*; after all, it is a piece about the media, and about manipulation in the press and on television and radio. I am only interested in exploiting whatever it is that makes the theater unique; that is surely not mechanization, because television can use it to greater effect, and films use it all the time. We are growing bored with people magically flying through the air, with scenery appearing and vanishing again. I think the audience is stimulated by its own imagination; we supply something and they

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fill in the rest. Opera depends on that partnership with the audience.

MENOTTI

I quite agree with Hal Prince. I run two theaters, one in Charleston and the other in Spoleto. In Charleston, everything is more or less mechanized, while in Spoleto we do everything by hand. I find that the productions in Spoleto somehow always come out much better. For example, there is the problem with the curtain. In almost every theater today the curtain is controlled by a mechanism, so you have to choose whether you want a fast curtain, a medium curtain, or a slow curtain. But there are times when you want to have a fast curtain for a while, then a middle curtain, and end with a slow curtain; that can only be achieved by hand. When producers come to Spoleto, they are always delighted by our manual operation. It may be true that some of our stage people have bleeding hands at the end, but it is marvelous to be able to do anything you want with the curtain, for example. I still prefer that flexibility.

SÖDERSTRÖM-OLOW

I would like to mention vocal amplification, which is used in many theaters. The first time I experienced it was when we performed in Toronto's Maple Leaf Gardens, which seats about fifteen thousand people, and it was absolutely necessary. I think that the next generation, which has grown up listening to amplified music and synthesizers, will not worry about this problem but simply take it for granted. Of course the sound of the natural voice can never be replaced; we want to keep it if at all possible. Many people who are accustomed to other kinds of voice projection, however, find the sound of the highly developed operatic voice distorted. Their first objection is always that opera sounds "unnatural."

BARBIERI

Whether a voice needs amplification or not depends upon how strong it is. A small voice probably does need amplification, but that also distorts it. Similarly, when a small voice is recorded, it tends to be distorted by the amplifiers—there is always some

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distortion on a record. In a large theater, it is necessary to project the voice, and here I am in favor of amplification.

SILLS

There is nothing more exciting to me than the sound of a well-trained human voice; I am perfectly willing to accept a small one, if it is a beautiful one. I am impressed not so much by size as by beauty. There are problems, however, when we perform operas that have spoken dialogue, such as those of Mozart, or Strauss's *Fledermaus*. A singer generally is not trained to project the spoken voice so much as the singing voice. In my own case, I have always had a very low speaking voice and a very high singing voice, and I find it very difficult to speak for long periods of time without becoming hoarse. When we perform *Fledermaus* in our house, we use floor microphones to pick up the dialogue, but we turn them off during the music, so the compensation is not out of balance. Shows like *Sweeney Todd* present another kind of problem because there is a great deal of dialogue spoken over the music. Our experience with that show was that the singers simply could not be heard speaking their lines above the orchestra. Since the plot was advanced through this dialogue, we decided to use body microphones for the amplification. At first there was a lot of trouble with "popping" and "clicking." By the fourth performance, however, we pretty much had the knack of it. However, in terms of traditional opera, the *Traviata*s and the *Pagliacci*s, and so forth, I do not think we should resort to amplification. We ought to consider each work individually. There is certainly no point in producing a work and then discovering that half the audience cannot hear it. If amplification is appropriate to a work, fine. But I do not think we should amplify the voice only to convince the public that it really is a large, booming sound when it is not.

MILLER

Amplification and projection are related to one another in that both deal with the notion of the space in which you experience a work. With muscials like *Cats*, it matters little where the sound is coming from because an atmosphere is produced that is really non-directional. In this case all that matters is the general atmo-

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sphere created by the music, so amplification is irrelevant, and probably helpful. With opera, however, where the direction of the sound in fact locates the singer, I believe amplification is disastrous. Amplification overlooks the nature of human hearing, which is binaural, on either side of the head, and takes account of the "head shadow." It actually obstructs this "head shadow," which is what you hear when you are sitting in a hall and listening to a sound being produced down on the stage. Your ears are picking up the sound stereophonically. That is completely disordered by amplification, no matter how subtle. It may be stereophonic in its arrangement, but it is not so in regard to the neurophysiology of the brain. There is no way that amplified sound in a hall will ever equal the natural stereophonic structure of hearing a voice coming from a particular place. At the risk of not hearing strong voices, I would much prefer to hear a voice slightly weaker but at least natural, rather than having this generalized sound which really has no relation to normal hearing function.

MCEWEN

Microphones and tape recorders are extremely useful for creating effects such as explosions and rock slides. They are also useful, in *Rheingold*, for picking up the sound of a railroad track being hit with hammers in a room half a mile away. Apart from that, and spoken recitatives, we make little use of the microphone in my theater. Computers, on the other hand, are helping us a lot.

SMITH

Some younger composers, particularly the "pop" composers use the microphone as a basic tool for composition. Specifically I am thinking of Philip Glass, but there undoubtedly will be others in the future. Opera theater will have to take this into account.

SÖDERSTRÖM-OLOW

On our Swedish tours, most of the houses in which we play have only between five hundred and a thousand seats. At one time I wanted very much to perform *La Voix Humaine*, but these small houses could only accommodate an orchestra of about twenty.

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We solved the problem by taping the orchestra, and I sang with the tape. It worked tremendously well because *La Voix Humaine* is a very intimate piece, and you need to be very close to the audience. We were worried that the voice might not blend with the pre-recorded sound, but we had no problems. The performance had such an impact on the audience that they seemed almost intoxicated.

MILLER

Elisabeth has talked about singing with a tape, which is equivalent to playing in front of a projected picture. These activities are absolutely parallel in that what happens with a projected picture is exactly what happens in the case of a taped sound: you lose parallax. You cannot, by moving your head, experience a difference in the distance from the object. No matter whether the person is standing in front of a stereophonic sound source or in front of a projected image, he is within the space where you are sitting. I do not necessarily object to this, but I think what we are talking about is a form of art, rather like a Schwitters' collage: we are placing a photograph alongside a physical object. We really have to understand what it is we are doing neurophysiologically. Amplification and projection operate according to a set of rational principles, in precisely the same way as stereophonic sound does with television. The reason there is concern about stereophonic sound with opera is that no one seems to understand that the speakers are in one place and the spectacle is in another; you are putting together two inconsistent pieces of neural information. It is a problem in neurophysiology, and it will not be solved until it is tackled on that level.

BURTON

Doesn't the human system solve the problem every time one watches something and listens to it stereophonically? In other words, doesn't one's mind make adjustments or allowances somehow for the differences in the systems?

MILLER

When you make that adjustment, you redesign the experience accordingly. One of the disappointing things about meetings of this

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sort is that we undertake to discuss technology, but as soon as the conversation becomes technical we lose interest. The technological *is* interesting; it is only because we have this catastrophic split between art and science that we tend to say, "Oh, well, let the technical people deal with that." That is why such a class distinction exists within opera. There are the fellows in the box who deal with the "practical" matters; then there are the "sensitive, really interesting" people who deal with the art. One of the reasons why the art is often so bad is that there is no fraternizing with science.

SÖDERSTRÖM-OLOW

Well, I am on the warpath. I don't believe that artists speak up enough about this problem, and it is indeed a vital concern in our theaters today.

CRAWFORD

Today everybody, including the major benefactors, seems to be entranced by young artists and computerization. Unfortunately, there is the expectation that the technological revolution is going to accomplish more than it can. Many of the people involved with opera, particularly the trustees, talk a great deal about bringing opera into the twentieth century. Consequently we begin to treat it as a corporation, not as theater. On the other hand, much of the new technology can be good. For example, at the Metropolitan Opera we are using personal computers for cataloging all our props and costumes. We have also computerized all the rehearsal schedules for the orchestra, the corps de ballet, and the chorus. Our lighting board is computerized and we now have our entire repertoire on that. Our computer has been absolutely necessary in the financial area, for payroll and budgeting. I recently had to authorize a capital expenditure of three hundred thousand dollars to straighten out some problems we have had with our computer system. I have resisted efforts to program the whole artistic process, which means we have avoided computerizing repertory and casting, because I am not sure that we would benefit in any way. The area I find of most value is the computerization of volume transactions. Every year we sell approximately sixteen-and-a-half million dollars worth of subscriptions, with a very

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heavy advance sale, and we receive about twenty-eight million dollars a year in contributions—all those transactions are computerized. The computer is extremely useful in many areas because it works so quickly, but it is certainly not a panacea for the basic problems of running our house.

MENOTTI

I agree that a performance with a pre-recorded orchestra can be most effective. However, I find that, when an opera is pre-recorded for television and the singer is to act with a tape, the performance is always wooden. We experimented very successfully with a recent staging of *Amahl.* We first recorded it with a very soft piano accompaniment so that the singers had complete freedom, then we made the conductor follow the singer rather than the singer having to follow a pre-recorded performance. I recommend this method to anyone who intends to make a video. It gives the singer complete freedom of expression and leaves it up to the conductor to follow the singer's performance rather than the other way around. In opera that is most important.

GOWRIE

I look upon computers entirely from a functional standpoint. A computer is a very effective tool for modern mass communications. Obviously it is essential to fundraising, sending out mailings, and distributing information. As to technology in general, I wish to return to a point made earlier. Part of the problem of funding opera is its enormous cost. It is an expensive art form, and we want to be able to reduce the non-artistic costs wherever we can. If you can do that through something like projection, or through new methods of shifting scenery, then technology presents some very attractive features. I had another thought, which may relate to the earlier discussion of small companies, when Gian Carlo described his preference for hand-made scenery. We inhabit an artistic world that is increasingly pervaded by high technology—recordings and electronic amplification are examples. An understanding of market forces suggests to me that part of the appeal of theater and opera comes as a reaction to high technology: people will want traditional, "hand-made" performances. A drawback is that you cannot simultaneously aim for that level of artistic production and

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afford audiences what might be called educational opportunities. You cannot take that kind of performance on tour as cost-effectively as you can a production that utilizes techniques that will reach a larger number of people in a single performance; nor is it economically feasible to bring it to small, isolated communities. Some kind of balance must be struck.

MOSER

I disagree with Bruce Crawford's approach only in one respect—his slight skepticism about computerizing the artistic side of opera. By that I mean something different from computerizing performances. Covent Garden is possibly the most complex opera house in the world, if only because we stage some five hundred opera and ballet performances every year. Our three companies tour both at home and abroad. The opera/ballet interface is particularly complex in terms of timing. Another high priority is to establish the financial consequences of different artistic patterns. We handle these matters with the help of computers. We have in the computer the contractual arrangements, the fees, the fee structure, rehearsal size structure, and so on. I am only making the obvious point: the most computers can do is make decision-making easier by giving more information and giving it faster. On the whole they are not staff savers; that is a misconception. But they are invaluable in making it easier to evaluate alternative patterns of performances and strategies. Should we do more ballet, more opera? More masterpieces, fewer—dare I say it in this forum?—contemporary works? With the help of computers we can look at a great many variables.

I also favor establishing a data bank of some sort. There is a project afoot in London to create a data bank of artists. This could be helpful when the tenor cancels at three o'clock in the afternoon. It would be very useful to know who is available for possible roles, and even, if I may be facetious, to know his airline accessibility. If it became a reality, such a data bank of artists and roles could be a valuable resource.

CRAWFORD

Computerization also makes it a lot easier for more people to become involved in the decision-making process. The more infor-

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mation you have, the more freely your board can say, "Well, why don't you pull the nine *Falstaffs* and do nine *Normas*?" One could spend a lot of time making this type of decision. Obviously it's good to know what you are doing so your payroll doesn't jump from eight million to ten million dollars, but there is a question in my mind of whether we want all our committees and boards looking over our shoulders. I am not against having the information, but there is a downside.

GALL

When working as deputy general manager at the Paris Opera with Rolf Liebermann, we had our box office computerized, and it worked. Every morning Rolf and I got a computer print-out of all the money we were entitled to spend. This was a little nonsensical because we had already committed our subsidies for the season, but our financial sponsors were happy to receive it from our office. To come back to the point about help from the computer in artistic matters, one may not need it because one has that information at the fingertips of one's staff. In terms of casting, computerization may not be helpful unless one could see the singers, but I would be very happy to be able to get a print-out of all the available Tannhäusers or to know more about American singers, for instance. Even if we could get all the casting information from the major houses, we might not know three-quarters of the performers. We would need to know where they have sung, which roles, where they will be performing. Then maybe we would have twenty-two possible Despinas, and we would probably be able to reduce the power of some big stars or some agents.

MCEWEN

You might know the size of her waist and her costume measurements, but you wouldn't know how good she is.

BURTON

Tennis players are ranked on computers. You could have your Tannhäusers in ranked order. Tenors who cancel several times might get black marks as part of the system.

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GALL

One might dream of a system in each country where a few very knowledgeable and clever people would feed data into the computer and the details would end up on our desks. It would indeed be helpful.

BURTON

But what about confidentiality? Isn't part of running an opera house playing the game of being a jump ahead of everyone else? What if you were suddenly persuaded that a certain singer was the perfect Marschallin, and you got the drop on everybody by getting her to agree to perform the parts and that information showed up in a data bank? It could well be that you do not want such information known, because you do not, in fact, want other people trying to get her in your timeframe, or offering her something else more attractive. I don't really understand this kind of "star wars" concept, and if you tell me there would be no problem with confidentiality I will believe you.

SILLS

I always look at the computer and say, "My mind is made up; don't confuse me with facts!" But computers are necessary monsters in our lives today, because we have a subscription series. Our situation is particularly complex, because we share the box office with the New York City Ballet, and both tickets and subscriptions are being sold simultaneously. We have just had to spend half a million dollars computerizing our house, and now we are in the process of computerizing the box office. I really resent having to spend that kind of money on technology rather than beautiful productions, but we have to keep track of our patrons, we have to know who gives and who doesn't, who was approached by whom, who should not be approached by whom. The computer provides all that information.

WHELDON

If computers provide you with details you do not particularly want, then they are indeed a nightmare. We are all too well informed about all sorts of things. Conversely, there are other

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areas where more information is precisely what is needed: in production schedules, for example. No opera house in the world can work without one. Once the schedule is established, it becomes the basis for dealing with a great variety of people in the weeks and months that follow. If you need to know quickly how many carpenters are going to be required for the ninth week of a production, the answer will be tied to your production schedule; you may need eighty-one, or three, or a hundred and seventy-six. If you can then discover from the computer a means of maximizing their work, you can gradually fine-tune your production schedule. You cannot do that without detailed knowledge, you cannot use that detailed knowledge unless you can obtain it quickly and accurately. If the computer will do that for you, then you have a first-class instrument; if it is only providing you with information you don't want, it is nothing but a nuisance.

BURTON

Would there be a way one could prepare some kind of an opera handbook for computer applications? Are there ways opera managements could be trained for specific tasks, or just get to know the computer better?

MILLER

I think there are very simple principles of artificial intelligence that could help people not misunderstand either the hostility or the friendliness of the computer, or overestimate its usefulness. People often tend to think of computers as superordinate geniuses with all sorts of dangers built into them. They really are not like that at all.

Reaching the General Public

BURTON

The future of opera depends to a great extent on its having a substantial audience. American statistics on the development of opera during the past decade reveal an enormous increase in opera-house life in both the United States and Canada. In England

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we can point to the development of English National Opera North, the Kent Opera, the Scottish Opera, the Welsh National Opera, as well as the two principal companies based in London, the Glyndebourne company, and the Glyndebourne touring company. Before World War II there were only Sadler's Wells and a season at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. Thus in the last forty years the number of opera performances in the U.K. must have multiplied between twenty and thirty times. Opera activity in Germany, Italy, and the Eastern Bloc countries has always been intense. It seems to me that these growing audiences need to be educated.

A major factor in the growth of this broad potential audience has been the transmission of opera on television, but this carries with it an inherent danger of pressure toward the middle ground of opera, which may become more intense through constant presentation of the basic Italian and German repertoire to the detriment of lesser-known or contemporary works, and of the world-class singer to the detriment of the singer who is not so famous.

Although I am a practitioner of televised opera, I still have strong reservations about its influence. Television provides an additional way of experiencing good opera, but it can never replace the experience of going to an opera house. The television viewer may essentially have a grandstand seat, but the television director is the one picking out the drama he sees through the cameras. Television requires the singers to become actors, as we saw so triumphantly in the transmissions of Wagner's *Ring* from Bayreuth, directed by Patrice Chéreau, which I believe in some ways came to its fulfillment through television. Also, the sensitive use of subtitles can enhance the meaning of the drama. In short, I want very much to see opera continue to be produced on television, yet at the same time I think we must remain attentive to the pitfalls involved.

SALLINEN

I would like to describe to you an experience I had when I was in West Germany last spring. A piece of mine was being staged in two small theaters in West Germany at approximately the same time. These towns are only about two hundred kilometers apart,

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and I was invited to visit both performances as a member of the audience. It was very easy to sense how the public received my work. In the smaller of the two towns, the audience was quite clearly familiar with the language and the grammar of twentieth-century music because they had been exposed to other productions. In the other town, where very few modern works had been presented, I immediately sensed my music would not be so well received. This shows that exposing people to contemporary works does make a difference, and that we need to educate them in a positive way to understand it.

BURTON

Let us return for a moment to this notion of the elite, and whether or not one can break down the so-called "barrier" around opera. Do others here believe that there can be no substitute for the experience, at whatever age, of going to the opera house to learn first-hand about opera?

MCEWEN

There is no substitute. We stage student performances, sung in English, since the average age of the audience is ten or eleven. Perhaps this is an American phenomenon, but we have found the children somewhat undisciplined, even rowdy. Indeed, I do not think it has proven particularly educational for them even though we provide an educational interlude during the performance when a member of the stage crew describes what is going on as the scenery is being changed. Last year for the first time we presented an opera in Italian. We used surtitles that had been made for the adult performance. This time the children actually paid attention. They had to read the words as well as see what was happening on the stage. They sat glued to the performance and were much more responsive with their applause and their booing. This change, however, did not detract from the educational part of the program. You could tell how much they enjoyed it.

SÖDERSTRÖM-OLOW

In Sweden we have several ways of interesting young people in opera. One is what we call a "peep-in" where the children come to

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the opera house to see how it works. This is similar to the "look-in's" at the Metropolitan Opera.

Whenever I have talked to schoolchildren I have noticed a very interesting thing. I generally talk to them about the various styles of opera. I tell them the plots, and I talk about acting. As long as I am talking, they listen. If I start to sing, or if I play an example on the tape recorder, they start talking to each other. I think this is because youngsters today have so much music around them all the time they cannot listen properly. This is a very serious problem that we tend to overlook. Children must be helped to listen and understand.

MOSER

The basic philosophy behind our children's program at Covent Garden is to enable them to see great performances. The emphasis is on school matinees with the same cast as the evening performance. We give them the best we have to offer. That is my first point. My second concerns pricing policy. If you want to bring young people, children or young adults, into the house, you have to face the question of pricing policy, which is of course ultimately a question of money. Children are much more receptive and easier to educate than adults, so we need more links to the young. My third point is to remind us of the great feeling of crisis with which we began these discussions, although, as has been mentioned, we have the biggest audiences everywhere today, and they seem to be growing. In Britain we fill a million opera seats each year, a terrific increase from even five years ago. We must not disdain youngsters whose main interest is in the music, rather than in what the producer or the designer does. A lot of young audiences are drawn to opera through music. I would dread any trend that tried to play down the musical component for the dramatic, which is something advocated frequently. Finally, although we all support ensemble opera, we must remember that a large number of youngsters want to hear the great artists and the great conductors. Let us not ignore this route into our art form, for it is a valid one.

MENOTTI

I must say I have absolutely no problems with children. Just as there are books written especially for children, there must be

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operas too, and I have written five such works. These are, in fact, the ones most frequently performed. During my operas, the children do not tear the seats because they can understand the words and because the operas are written for them. You cannot expect a child to be especially interested in an opera where the heroine is slowly dying of tuberculosis.

SILLS

We do not make music, or the appreciation of it, an integral part of our children's early education. Opera theater has thus become a "cultural" event for them rather than an integral part of life. It remains a special experience that they may vaguely hope they will be able to return to at some future time. We have a separate administrative department just to arrange our visits to schools in Harlem, the Bronx, and other underprivileged areas of New York City. We have developed very innovative means of gaining funding. We do children's operas and arrange for the singers to dress and put on their makeup right in front of the audience, talking all the time about the opera and singing the melodies. I only wish we could make such performances part of children's everyday lives.

MCEWEN

The Dallas Opera performed *Medea* several years ago and decided to present it at the children's performance. The Opera Guild objected because, of course, Medea kills her children in one scene. Finally, in desperation, the Dallas Opera asked, "Well, what opera *would* you like?" They chose *Tosca*. Children simply love violence, murder, and people dying of consumption. That's how you get their attention.

BARBIERI

Three years ago a small, non-commercial theater was established in Florence, where operas are chosen and performed especially for young people. Members of the orchestra tour the provinces in Italy educating the young in the art of opera at no cost to the children. There is no instruction in music at school, so it becomes the responsibility of the local township to provide young people with

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a musical education. Such theaters realize that it is important to choose special works for children's performances.

MENOTTI

Although it has been kindly said that I invented television opera, I must admit that I hate opera on television. I never watch it, simply because I think that the cinematic technique is the very opposite of operatic technique. Cinema is an art of action; opera is a contemplative form of art. Opera anticipates the action, which is generally very quick, and subsequently comments on the action. When you have a quintet on television, the camera is always moving from one musician to another, and of course it destroys what Jonathan Miller calls the "sound space."

However, it would be foolish for a composer today to ignore television. I receive thousands of letters every year from children who have watched my Christmas opera. Television is the most popular form of theater nowadays, so we have to cope with it, and perhaps we should try to find a composer who will find it possible to write an opera for television. It would be possible to have a cinematographic opera. For years I have been begging millionaires to commission me to write an opera for film. Such an undertaking would involve a technique that is just the opposite of theatrical opera. Anything else would look ridiculous. I saw an excerpt from *Manon Lescaut* on the screen and I was ashamed. It doesn't look like that on the stage. With television, everything we do is a compromise.

GOWRIE

Maestro Menotti is surely right about the challenge of finding people with money to commission opera especially for television or film. However, his condemnation would seem to me to be more of film than television. I think television should be regarded as a teaching medium; it serves that purpose in painting, in natural history, and so on. If opera appears regularly on television, audiences will become familiar with the repertoire, which is, I think, incredibly important for a number of reasons. People who are involved in opera and opera production are obviously interested in seeing new works performed. But *Figaro* is a new work for millions of people.

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It will only be when the standard repertoire becomes better known that the public is going to be interested in different kinds of productions. Therefore it seems to me essential that those who want to edge opera forward, or into slightly new areas, should consider television.

MILLER

Whether or not one approves of it, there will continue to be leakages from the opera houses into the television pipes, where a lot of money is to be made. Broadcasts from opera houses are going to continue, with all the advantages and major disadvantages associated with them. The question of whether you can make an opera for television is a wholly separate problem. I agree with Gian Carlo Menotti that composing for the television screen is probably impossible. We should reflect on why it can be done for plays but not for opera. The main reason, of course, is that in opera people speak at the same time, which does not happen on the stage. In film or television, you can move from one actor to another to create the action. In an opera where several people are singing simultaneously, often with a chorus, it is extremely difficult to compose the spectacle effectively on the screen. This problem is very much related to the small size of domestic television screens. It can be surmounted to some extent with the large cinematic screen, but ultimately it remains a question of the space you are trying to represent.

SALLINEN

I agree with Gian Carlo Menotti. I think one of the basic problems with combining television and opera is that the medium was not created by the needs of the art. We have the technique first, then we try to find some way to fit the artistic content to the apparatus.

MENOTTI

I see many young people turn on a televised opera, and when they see a ridiculous looking tenor belting out something incomprehensible they immediately turn it off. They should be encouraged to go to the opera house instead.

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WHELDON

I would like to try to bring a new perspective to this matter. I think television is actually beneficial in the sense that opera-goers themselves are the people who doubtless watch televised performances, just as people who are keen on tennis watch tennis. To my mind, the only question—and it is not a huge one ideologically—is how to make television performances of opera as good as possible. Seeing a cricket match on television is quite different from going to one, just as listening to a record is quite different from going to a concert. We all know that mediocrity and meritriciousness are the enemies in the opera house. This is true of television as well. Quality is what matters, and to get that quality you have to find first-rate directors who are both musical and true to the opera, then you must give them cameramen and sound engineers who are equally serious. Given that collaboration you will be able to create a great video recording. That is what our National Video Corporation is attempting to do with recordings of productions at the Royal Opera House, La Scala, the Metropolitan, and so on. We've been fortunate to have been able to make thirty-six so far. In a sense, what we are doing with video recording is the equivalent of what audio recording tried to do years ago. I am not suggesting that these recordings will replace opera theater, nor that they represent a different way of handling opera. The process of writing operas specifically for television and performing them in studios is a wholly different operation, and I think it is an important artistic endeavor that will influence traditional opera in various ways.

One final word. I was brought up to believe that, on the whole, opera had wonderful music but nonsensical plots. English opera-goers seem to represent that tradition: they expect wonderful music and a simplistic plot that might be paraphrased as "There is this girl, and she is married to this young man who is the son of this other man who is the king, but they don't know it yet . . ." and so on. I am afraid you could describe any Shakespeare play in those terms and make nonsense of it. It is only when you understand and can follow the dialogue that the work shows its merit. The use of subtitles on television and videos actually helps the audience see that the stories themselves are important and that the composers were not frivolous in choosing their libretti, that this so-called

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"nonsense" is not a dismissible ingredient of the opera. I truly believe that the use of subtitles on television has helped audiences to appreciate better what it is they are seeing.

COX

There has been much discussion about whether or not we need surtitles or subtitles. I think that they are there as an assistance rather than as a compulsion. Ultimately, however, the true text of the opera is the music.

If that music takes quintet form, and during it we see a close-up of the tenor, then I consider this to be a major advantage of television, not a disadvantage. The text continues in the ear, the picture varies to please the eye. You can close in on a component detail that may enrich the dramatic effect, yet you do not lose the basic text, which is the music.

Finally, let me say that we are all aware of how much radio and records have changed our attitude towards listening to music. We listen more flexibly, and, I think, with more creative participation. Indeed, television and video recordings can also change the way we look at opera.

Finding the Funding

BURTON

The American pattern of funding opera is quite different from the European pattern. Since 1637, it has been taken for granted in Europe that the city, the municipality, or the state will play a large part in the funding of this expensive, irrational, and exotic art form. While we expect that the box office will bring in some financial contribution, in some institutions that can be as low as 10 percent. Indeed, I am told that a third of the total revenue is thought to be quite a respectable contribution from the box office. In America, more like 50 or 60 percent is expected. In addition, there are distinct and major differences in the philosophies of European and American funding. In the United Kingdom we seem to be moving towards something closer to the American system in

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recent years, where opera is increasingly supported by individuals and decreasingly by the generous coffers of the state.

GOWRIE

I only know Britain in terms of these funding issues and problems, though my office has tried to take a close comparative look at other systems. It seems to me that Britain is not untypical of the social democracies and represents some of the challenges and difficulties before them. I do not quite agree with one thing that Humphrey said: I don't think there is a move towards the American system in Britain. I think we are still firmly attached to a mixed economy in this regard, with a plurality of funds coming into opera and to the arts generally. I have no doubt that the state will continue to be the major patron of the arts generally, and to opera in particular, under successive governments in Britain, in spite of continued public indifference, and indeed disapproval, of class AB activities being funded out of general taxation.

The outlook for the British system is, like our climate, mixed! I have no doubt, however, that successive governments will continue to give small increases in real terms to the arts every year. Funding organizations have maintained opera support within this context, despite the very high costs of opera. I think this will continue, whatever the great problems for funding organizations. I should explain to the non-British delegates that there is a difference between the people who actually do the funding and myself, the Minister. I fund organizations who then make the decisions quite independently of me. The difficulty for these organizations is the very high cost of opera within the costs of arts generally. The Arts Council of Great Britain estimates that opera costs about £20 per seat in subsidy, compared to about £3 per seat for theater and about £7.50 for ballet and dance. In 1985 and 1986, opera will be taking one-fifth of the entire Arts Council of Great Britain budget for all arts in the country.

The "fair weather" then is that I think the state attention and state funding of these bodies will continue in more or less the same way over future years. The bad news, it seems to me, is this: Britain does, I think, provide enough money for appropriate base funding

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of these major institutions but does not provide enough money under successive governments for their growth.

The most important thing is, of course, getting value out of the funding that we do provide. Is there a way of breaking or reducing the immense spiral of rising costs? High technology provides one answer: Harold Prince mentioned projection—it is lively but also inexpensive. Secondly, we have to look for other sources of income. Local authorities are very important in funding terms in Britain. Patronage is also important; everyone wants tax changes on the American lines. This is a large issue. Roughly speaking, I could achieve the American system without any difficulty, but in doing so I would lose the British system, and most people want both. They want a fairly substantial form of subsidy, and, on top of that, they want a substantial form of deduction, which I think would not be possible. It is also the case that Americans go in for self-assessment, which we do not do, and they are much, much harsher on people who dodge taxes than the British are. The future of patronage to me would involve the small giver, and we are looking at some tax incentives in that direction. Sponsorship by businesses is going well, and I am using public money to encourage this support in much larger quantities, and that, at present, is a fruitful and likely form of growth. My final point is this: as someone who loves opera, I feel that you in the major opera houses are still under-charging for seats. In real terms it is much cheaper to go to the opera today than it was when I was a boy, and Great Britain is substantially better off. I don't know whether that is the experience of other social democracies. In short, I would not despair about all this. Plural funding is a reasonable way forward. The great difficulty is to see how the immense costs of this unique art form can be contained.

TOOLEY

There is a lot of value in having supporters around you, and I would never underestimate or minimize the value of that kind of support. I would worry on the other hand about these supporters getting a little bit too close and beginning to influence artistic policy. This is something of which we have to be very careful

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because there are certain trends, particularly in America, that I would suggest are not very healthy for the future of opera.

There is a general point that I think is attached entirely to the philosophy of public funding of the arts and the first point Grey Gowrie made about public indifference. My own feeling is that there is a great deal of public indifference, and there is an unhealthy confinement of interest in opera, ballet, music, and many other aspects of a cultural life to the AB groups, largely because the level of funding both for the arts and for education is insufficient. We are also failing to disseminate news, for want of a better word, to the world at large. We are not giving the young, the adolescents in Great Britain at least, the chance of discovering what all these art forms are about. I would argue that we are spending money wrongly. We are not spending it in the interest of the future of any cultural activity, and I believe that it behooves all of us who run opera houses and other cultural institutions to put tremendous effort and money behind our educational schemes and educational promotion. Until we do that we are not achieving one of those principal philosophies of public funding, which is access. Access is not, I suggest, confined only to the box office and the level of ticket prices. I would argue with the Minister that in fact we are in danger, indeed even being pushed into a situation where we have to maximize box office revenue to the detriment of opera in the future. I would also argue that one of the aims of public funding is to insure accessibility—accessibility through the box office, accessibility through opportunity—provided by a proper approach to the young, to adolescents, through education. I am referring to education not only in the way that opera houses are now beginning to develop it but also through musical programs, and so on, in schools, and here I think we are falling lamentably behind. I believe we are actually wasting public money at the moment.

SMITH

The whole concept of funding the arts on a national level in the United States is still very new, although I can say, now that the National Endowment has existed for twenty years, that it is a concept that is accepted by the majority of the public, though there is still some resistance to the idea of public funding for the arts

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throughout the United States. Now of course we at the Endowment fund a great deal more than the visual arts, ballet, opera. I only wish that one-fifth of our budget would go to opera; it is far, far less than that. The Endowment funds a variety of programs, which not only include opera, dance, theater, and visual art but experimental arts as well, so that opera gets a very small share of the total. The total amount that was distributed last year was $162,000,000; we received about $6,000,000. That $6,000,000 is obviously inadequate in any real sense to do the kind of job that John Tooley is talking about in education, even to do the job of assuring the future of the many opera companies of varying sizes that we have in the United States.

At the Endowment, we often use small amounts of money as what we call a "seal of approval." If money comes from the National Endowment in Washington, it is used as an imprimatur of the success of that company. Once that is done, we find that that company can raise anything from six to ten or even twenty times that amount of money in local help, not only from private sources, but also from corporations. Corporations constantly ask whether applicants have received funding from us. If their funding from the Endowment has been increased, they are more likely to receive income from these other sources.

As program director at the Endowment, I appoint panels of peers in the field. Singers, composers, opera directors, producers, even board members come in and review the entire range of applications for funding, and they not only determine whether the organizations will be funded, but also to what level they will be funded. In addition, we are trying to take a few dollars in the opera–musical theater program to use them for pilot projects. We then develop new programs, based on the success or failure of these pilot programs.

EVERDING

I am not very interested in private supporters because the state reduces my subsidy according to the amount I receive privately. You see, the Federal Republic spends $700,000,000 for eighty-five theaters and orchestras, but I have to add that it spends ten times as much for sport and thirty times as much for high schools, and

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I think we are as necessary as high schools. When I come to the United States I am often asked whether the state, which gives such a large amount of money, interferes. In my twenty-three years as an intendant, never has a Minister interfered. If he had, I would have quit the next day. We do indeed get a lot of money, but we are free, totally free, in spending it. Sometimes we fear interference when we receive private money. I have actually heard examples of the patron demanding certain results.

In Germany last year five million people attended opera. We had 5,500 spectacles and we had 320 new productions. With this subsidy we really can stand a flop, and I don't fear a flop. Our system is quite different from what you have in the United States or the United Kingdom. We are totally subsidized, and even if the box office made no money, I would still get the subsidy. Naturally, the state wants good box office returns, but this is not essential. For example, they hope that the box office at the Festival will cover approximately 25 percent of costs. If I earn more than the estimate I can use the additional funds for commissioning operas or other enterprises. In Munich I run the State Opera and the Cuvillies Theater, and with the subsequent extra funding, an experimental theater.

GOMEZ

The situation in Italy is particularly unusual. In 1984, for the first time, a law was approved that gives three years' funding for music, theater, and all the arts. The total sum for distribution is 2,000,000,000 lire, with L600,000,000 allocated to 1985, L700,000,000 to 1986, and L700,000,000 to 1987; in other words, there was an increase initially, and then the amount remained fixed. Fifty percent of the L600,000,000 for 1985 was allotted to the most important theaters—La Scala, Bologna, Venezia, and others. In Italy, opera is supported up to 70 percent by the government; private contributions do not exist except in rare cases such as La Scala, where they are in any case insufficient. Italian theater is further handicapped by the problem of the enormous fixed overhead for employment, so there is very little money left for the productions themselves. We are hoping to introduce legislation that will restrict the percentage of money

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spent on wages, so allowing more for the production costs. This is the only way of solving the problem, although it will create difficulties because in many theaters the fixed salaries exceed this level. While some theaters will use the money they receive from the state for traditional purposes, others will use their funding for more innovative programs—coproduction, filming, developing technological capabilities for the future. We shall see which theaters are capable of helping themselves in this way. However, many theaters threaten to incur such large expenses that they will see themselves closed in the future.

CRAWFORD

The Metropolitan Opera is now back in deficit again. That is bad, for to be successful at fundraising in the United States you have to be in surplus. Foundations punish you for not running your business properly, and individuals also want to associate with success. We get the bulk of our money from individuals, not from the government, corporations, or foundations. The tax structure of course implies government support, because, in a state like New York, for example, if an individual gives $100,000, the state is in fact paying $57,000 and the individual $43,000 because he or she is not taxed on the contribution. We may talk about the free enterprise system, but we are in fact heavily subsidized by the tax structure. Finally, if you have a weak intendant you will have proportionately more interference. When somebody gives a million dollars, we are aware of the fact that they may have preferences and we are undoubtedly sometimes influenced by them. However, artistic integrity has the highest importance in my opinion.

SALLINEN

In Finland we have an effective system of stipends; for instance, we give a monthly stipend to creative artists. I think that for composers it is not very important where the money comes from, only that it come at the proper time and in large sums. The most important thing is that the commissioner should not affect the content of the creative art. Our art, and especially opera, is very strongly subsidized by the Finnish state—up to 60 or 70 percent—followed by the city of Helsinki, and then of course by the box office, which

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covers a small proportion of the costs everywhere. A very nice exception to this is the Savonlinna Opera Festival, where the box office covers more than 60 percent of all costs and the rest of the money comes from the state and the town. During the past couple of years, more and more private industry—the banks and so on—have given money to cultural activities. It is also noteworthy that in Finland the modern pieces are the first to sell out.

WEIDENFELD

I think our job in the social democracies all over the Western world is to work in our own societies and cultures to create overwhelming public support for the arts—the kind of unquestioned support that makes a change of stewardship in the Vienna opera front-page news. Now, in Great Britain, it is very difficult to open a debate on the arts without being faced with a polite yawn from everybody. In fact there is still a populist lobby in our newspapers against anything to do with the arts, let alone elitist art such as opera. I believe we must address, as a top priority, this cultural educational process or we shall never close the gap between the German model described by August Everding and the British model described by John Tooley.

MOSER

The facts are that in Britain and America, Australia and Germany—in all the countries I know—the overall costs of opera are going up much faster than inflation. What is happening to singers' fees and to production costs? We have heard the staggering figure of $800,000 for a production. Is this really inevitable?

MILLER

Our national health service, unadvertised BBC, and subsidies of the arts are part of a collective view we have of the public life in England that is in jeopardy at the moment. There has been a great deal of discussion at this conference about the notion of education, of publicizing and extending the province of opera, and it has been spoken of as if somehow this responsibility is monopolized by the great flagship companies. In fact, an enormous amount of educa-

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tion and of publicizing the arts is done by companies who are conspicuous by their very absence from this table.

I believe that if we are going to look at the future of opera in Europe, and particularly in England, it is going to be to some extent by funding these small institutions who do, as I say, suffer impudent condescension and exclusion. My presence here as a delegate on behalf of the Kent Opera is completely incidental and by no means deliberate, but I think that it is a scandal that companies like this are not routinely represented on occasions of this sort.

SÖDERSTRÖM-OLOW

If we are ever going to get rid of the word "elitist" for opera, we must lower the ticket prices in order to foster interest among people who are drawn to opera, but cannot afford to pay such high prices to attend it. If we are going to use state subsidies, if we are going to use tax money, then we should help these people enjoy it!

Some Final Reflections

EVERDING

Ten years ago, when television was becoming a major force, the pessimist would tell you that in ten years nobody would read a book or play music at home; it would all be over, culture would be finished. Today, in my country, there have never been so many people using the public libraries, there have never been so many museum visitors, never has so much music been played in private homes—all this despite the proliferation of television.

I have been to China now three times. I produced *The Magic Flute* in Shanghai and Beijing, and the young people understood Mozart's work the moment they heard it! They are not trained in, or exposed to, Western culture, but they understood it. We must also remember that last year at the Belvedere competition in Vienna the first four winners were all from Shanghai. They did not

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sing Chinese music, but Mozart, Wagner and Strauss. They were outstanding.

ROSENTHAL

Some people have accused the critic of being an *artiste manqué* because he may have wanted to be a singer, or an actor, or a writer, or a painter, and on that basis he should not be allowed to criticize those who have embraced these professions. However, I believe Dr. Johnson hit the mark when he posed the question of whether a critic should practice the art he criticizes. He then answered himself by saying that such a thing would be sheer nonsense: the fact that one cannot make a table, or did not make a particular table, in no way makes one any less qualified to judge a table's merits. The very fact that we use tables every day makes us qualified to judge them.

The critic can never divorce himself from the art he loves; try as he may to be objective, some subjective analysis will creep in. I firmly believe that one must love the art form one criticizes. In a very early issue of *Opera*, Constant Lambert contributed a marvelous article about criticism, and about British critics in particular. He said, "Obviously most of them sit underneath a motto that says, 'Above all, no enthusiasm.' " Yet if the day should ever come when I no longer enjoy going to the opera, no longer appreciate music, then I will give up being a critic. As it is now, I always try to put myself in the audience's place. Many are hearing their first *Figaro*; I may be hearing my two hundred and fiftieth. When I review the performance, I always try to recapture something of my own emotion at first hearing that opera, and to pass on something of my own enthusiasm to the young people hearing it for the very first time. In short, the critic has a very important role to play in opera, provided he can be objective, retain his enthusiasm, and always remember that he is part of the process of educating the opera audiences of the future.

MILLER

I think that plurality is the essence of the performing arts. If I sometimes seem querulous about that, it is because, in the effort to maintain a true, fair plurality on behalf of small and unmentionable and, indeed, unmentioned opera companies, it is sometimes

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necessary to speak rather raucously, even querulously, for them, giving, perhaps, a false impression that I believe theirs is the work of the great companies.

There is one phrase I hope never again to hear spoken in public, which is the notion of "centers of excellence." That is truly an impudent and pretentious notion. Excellence occurs when we are touched by the finger of God, and no one knows where it will come and when it will arrive. I believe that there must be plurality in this area and we have no idea where, in any of these particular centers, excellence will come to pass. I do think it is a great shame that, in some of the smaller companies, which in fact do extend a public or educational service of great value, it is often necessary to undergo enormously humiliating experiences simply to stay alive. If you are looking to the future of opera, I do assure you that it is only if those companies stay alive that future generations will actually continue to favor this art form.

DIAMAND

When we speak about the future of opera, we must consider the problems opera is facing at the moment, which could become more threatening and more serious in the future. Considering the high quality of technical products—records, television performances, and all that is available through the media—a great number of the opera performances we see, even in the greatest houses, are not as good as many of us would wish them to be. One of the reasons is that both opera and the orchestral worlds today suffer severely from a lack of conductors who have real musical knowledge or musical experience. On the "stock market of conductors," there are, I would say, only about twenty "top quality" conductors; among those twenty, there are quite a few who hardly qualify for the positions and the fees that they command. Many more than twenty are needed for the "top jobs" in the orchestras and opera houses of the world. Some are being given responsibilities that greatly exceed their talents. Their lack of musical authority, of musical quality, often tempts opera directors to employ stage directors, some of whom boast of never having heard an opera before, being little interested in the medium. What the conductor fails to achieve—to make an opera performance musically alive,

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interesting, and memorable—the stage director is expected to, by giving a "new angle" to a well-known work, perhaps thereby causing controversy, and, with good luck, even scandal.

I would like to mention also the lack of singers for an important part of the operatic repertoire. There are certain operas that cannot be cast in the way conductors and stage directors would wish to cast them, without making concessions that affect the quality and integrity of the performances.

While there is little time now to discuss the shortage of competent and authoritative conductors, we must recognize that the quality of performances suffers from this shortage, particularly in the leading theaters, where audiences are entitled to expect authenticity and do not suspect that much of what they hear bears only a limited resemblance to it.

As for the lack of singers, while there is certainly a great amount of talent about, particularly in the United States, where there are many gifted and well-trained singers, what is still lacking in Europe is the kind of apprenticeship available to singers between the end of their actual training—whether at Juilliard, Curtis, or with private teachers—and their active involvement in operatic life. An opera director or a festival manager is often tempted to employ artists who are at the beginning of their careers. The lack, or the shortage, of experienced, responsible conductors creates the risk that these voices are very quickly used, abused, and wasted. I was encouraged by what I heard of the important educational work being done in the U.S.A. But what is the situation in Europe? While there are opera studios, workshops, and master-classes that carry out this task, often quite successfully, it is all on a very limited scale. What, except for a lack of funds, prevents us from creating an international academy *cum* apprenticeship for gifted singers, an institution in which experienced artists—conductors, stage directors, singers, and actors—would devote some of their time to preparing singers for their future careers? One would have to compensate them generously, perhaps over-generously, for the loss of income from other sources during these educational work periods, but would this not be a major investment that would make the future outlook for opera in Europe much brighter?

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COX

I believe the current crisis in opera is being fomented both by a serious shortage of money and by the unpredictability of its supply. It is, however, an art form that in itself is in need of reappraisal, and this would seem to be a good time to do it. The deliberations of this assembly—heavily weighted as it is on the non-artistic side and with a high average age, meeting in one of the birthplaces of opera, in rich and exclusive surroundings—run the risk of being preservationist or even reactionary. In economic terms, this means that we seem to be investigating means of raising more and more money in order to keep opera exactly as it is. An alternative objective would be to acknowledge that opera has become too cumbersome and costly, and to seek ways of making it less so. This, however, must be a matter in the first instance not for economists, statisticians, fundraisers, publicists, or even educators, but for artists who must pursue this objective creatively rather than defensively—either in writing or in adapting works for our changing circumstances, which in any case are not simply financial. Such changes include the expansion and alteration of leisure patterns, the new technologies of listening and looking and, indeed, the ever-developing outlook on life, much of which today cannot be directly reflected in the standard repertoire of thirty or so works, which often seem increasingly irrelevant unless manipulated by so-called arrogant directors. The artists involved in such a project should be encouraged to develop a musico/dramatic language accessible to a far larger audience than the exclusive, reclusive music written by many composers since Schoenberg. Indeed, if the market is going to rule, they will have to adapt.

Finally, academicism will always be the bane of the performing arts. Drama and ballet have broken free, and popular music has never been hindered by it. Opera must be prepared to treat its basic materials much more freely, especially if this is the only way to enlarge its appeal and secure its economic viability. There must and will always be authentic performances somewhere, but we should avoid an over-protective attitude.

MENOTTI

I am pleasantly surprised that we are all in apparent agreement on many issues. But I am also aware that secretly we are very critical

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of each other, and we do not always admire each other's achievements. I must say that all of us, and I include myself, approach this subject with a little too much arrogance and pretense. Let us face the fact that each of us, and again I include myself, secretly thinks that he or she has the only right approach toward the future of opera or is the only one who truly understands how to solve its problems. I am quite sure that, after all this, we shall all go back to our jobs and carry on as we have in the past. To put it briefly, I think we have approached the problems of opera with a little, but not enough, humility, as I think every artistic matter should be faced. We are sincerely and profoundly agreed on one thing: we all think that we need and deserve financial help, and we are all here—or perhaps only I am here—in the hope that the Wheatland Foundation will take pity on us and be sympathetic to our cries, or interested in our plans.

Yes, it is true, I am here mainly because I am searching for help. I am now seventy-four years old, and after fifty years of bitter struggle with many opera houses, after many experiments with all kinds of operatic expression, I now feel that I should be given the chance to share my fifty years of experience with younger people in my own theater school. We have spoken of marrying opera with modern technology. I wrote the first television opera, the first radio opera. I made the first successful film of an opera, my own *Medium*. We have talked about giving children an operatic education. I have written five operas for children; they are my most devoted audiences and my greatest source of income. We have spoken about reducing the costs of opera. I am sorry to have to say "I" so many times, but that is what I am here for. I was able to prove that when opera is taken out of its "gilded cage" it can reach new, and perhaps unexpected, audiences. It can even be made to pay for itself as my operas, *The Consul, The Medium, Amahl and the Night Visitors*, and *The Saint of Bleeker Street*, have shown.

We have spoken about giving new artists, young artists, a chance. For twenty-eight years now I have been doing just that, in and out of Spoleto. We have given "first chances" to artists such as Patrice Chéreau, Jessye Norman, Shirley Verrett, Pinchas Zukerman, and Luca Ronconi. Although I get help, I have no major subsidies from any state, and I never know until it's almost too late whether I shall have enough money for the next season. How have

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I managed to survive for twenty-eight years under such dangerous conditions? First, because there is an idea behind my endeavors, because I have never shirked personal sacrifice, either financial or artistic. When I am about to go under, angels fly to my side and rescue me. But so many miracles make for a wretched existence. Where am I now?

We have talked about the importance of new works, but where are the patrons who are willing to nurse and protect new works? Where are the recording companies willing to record or videotape these new works so that the public may get to know them? I am not an unknown composer, but my own operas, *Consul, Medium, Amahl*, and so on, have been out of print for decades, and I see no serious interest in re-recording them. As for performances, if it were not for the small opera houses who keep my works alive, I would have a hard time making a living.

Why do I go on then? Well, eternal hope keeps me reasonably young. When I *was* young, I was a courageous hunter; now I have become a passive begger. My hat is in front of me, patiently waiting for charitable pennies. But I have not yet given up!

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Erich Leinsdorf

Opera: What Constitutes Longevity

A MASSIVE *CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ*, *Annals of Opera*,[1] starting in the year 1594 and ending in 1940, regales us with approximately 4,000 entries of first nights, local premieres, translations, and other items of interest. Browsing through the huge tome and its indices, one puzzle is more intriguing than all the others: why a small number of operas have succeeded and lasted, while many more have been relegated to the shelves. Obvious failures are very easily spotted; they are simply listed, with "world premiere" being described in four or five lines. Successes are spread over several columns, indeed, sometimes whole pages of the *Annals*. Such data are eloquent reminders of the fact that instant enthusiasm and lasting validity are rarely synonymous.

For many years, I have watched, coached, conducted, and discussed opera and its problems. I have long been interested in why, for example, *Cavalleria rusticana* (1890) is played everywhere, while the same composer's *L'amico Fritz* (1891) languishes in the archives. If this were true only of Mascagni's works I should not exert myself. The fact is that there are gaps in our understanding of what constitutes temporary success as contrasted with lasting appeal.

Opera is a composite of many arts and is dependent on a good number of interpreters: painters and architects design the sets that are executed in shops; others deliver the sketches for costumes, in some instances several hundred for the chorus; a lighting expert may do much to help or handicap a production. Such creations are ideally part of a larger concept of a producer (stage director), whose authority and policy decisions have become increasingly important in

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recent decades. Musical directors, once the undisputed commanders in opera companies, now find themselves in the back seat, sometimes through their own dereliction; they do not much care for the new balance of power. Perhaps a close look at those operas that are still with us may provide some clues to the question posed in *Capriccio:* "Prima la musica, dopo le parole, Prima le parole, dopo la musica?"

The survival of the performing arts often depends on the availability of first-rate talent. Eighteenth-century *opera seria* came to an end when the supply of castrato singers dried up, caused in great part by Napoleon's ukase forbidding the operation that prevented the mutation of male voices. No matter how often *Idomeneo* may be edited and revived, there is no chance of hearing the work as it was intended—an important voice in that opera no longer exists. Every generation has witnessed resurrection attempts—Richard Strauss made an elaborate one in the late 1920s—welcomed by all who admired Mozart, who could not get enough of his work to satisfy their appetites. Still, the best efforts are only partially convincing; it is difficult to secure a firm place in the repertoire for this *opera seria.*

Bellini, Donizetti, and Rossini, to name some of the most famous composers, continued to write operas for very great singers, men and women able to negotiate vocal parts demanding acrobatic skills of larynx, lungs, and vocal chords. These works, except for the perennial comedies *Elisir d'amore, Barbiere di Siviglia,* and *Don Pasquale* go into limbo for decades until a truly magnetic artist of the caliber of Maria Callas brings about their revival. While it may be impolite to suggest that many of these scores have no intrinsic merit beyond displaying great vocal virtuosity, I do not hesitate to compare such compositions to the music for violin written by Paganini; it is remarkably effective when played by a wizard, remarkably vapid when simply contemplated as music *per se.*

Longevity cannot be forecast for a genre that has uncounted sleepers on library shelves. Who knows which singer of tomorrow will emerge from a vault in Padua or Palermo with a more complex version of *Norma* or a sequel to *Guillaume Tell?* Of titles that have lasted, independent of extraordinary singers on the major stages of the world, one can hardly count more than one hundred.

The best example of an opera that exists independently of the quality of voices is *Carmen.* There is no harder role to cast; yet, not a season passes without Bizet's setting of Merimée's tale being

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produced. No other opera has been rearranged and revised more, which may be taken as further proof of its indestructibility. Not many other operas belong to this exclusive club. They have found favor on every continent, in every city where opera is part of public entertainment. A large number of other genuine masterpieces, with good libretti and fine scores, are assured devoted admirers, but only in specific places. They represent something else, reminding one of a "vin du pays," which must be drunk where it is grown since it does not "travel well." In this category belong two superb pieces: Debussy's *Pelléas* and Pfitzner's *Palestrina*. There must be many other works that have never traveled, never been widely heard or seen. For many years, *The Invisible City of Kitesh* had a great reputation, yet it never played in the West. Is it possible that this opera, like much of the Slavic repertoire, is fairly inaccessible to audiences that lack a particular cultural background and preparation?

Since most of my argument will be about public reception of opera, and since this is a highly complex subject, my conclusions must be tentative. In recent memory, a concert performance of Debussy's opera was acknowledged by nearly a mass exodus of the audience after the second act, a happening that may be expected to discourage anyone from presenting the work in that city for at least the next decade or two. While such things happen in all the performing arts, they do not fundamentally change the quality of a work's components, which in my view are subject to well-established criteria. The requirements for an opera's long and healthy life before the public are three: 1) memorable set pieces; 2) dramatic situations and *personae* with whom the public can identify; 3) the caliber of the score. It may be difficult for non-musicians to grasp the difference between "memorable pieces" and "caliber of score"; a comparison from gastronomy may illustrate it. One chef produces several outstanding dishes (memorable); another has a very high level of quality whatever one tastes ("caliber of the whole score"). The term "memorable" has two interpretations: a) easily remembered; and b) unforgettable. "La donna è mobile" is easily remembered: it remains in the ear; it can be whistled; it is both catchy and unforgettable. The quintet from the third act of *Meistersinger* cannot be whistled or sung, and much more than one finger is required to reproduce it on a piano. However, once the piece has penetrated a sensitive nervous system it will remain a luminous and unforgettable happening.

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It takes a considerable number of memorable pieces, as well as other components, to propel an opera successfully through the requisite two or three hours. It is simpler to state the case in reverse: no opera without memorable moments can enjoy more than limited success, and then with a limited public. Of my examples, both *Rigoletto* and *Meistersinger* meet all three criteria. There is not a weak link in either work, and yet one knows, without any Gallup poll, that a huge difference exists in the number of people who respond to these two works. Many more can and will identify with the drama of Rigoletto: a crippled widower must watch helplessly while his dissolute boss seduces his only child; he hires a hit-man; a warm-hearted prostitute saves the lecherous seducer; and, to add a gothic touch, a curse on Rigoletto by another offended father has been fulfilled. In forty-odd words the essential synopsis is complete.

At least 400 words would be necessary to prepare a newcomer for even a minimal understanding of *Meistersinger*. The piece is complicated on many levels. While the original French story of *Rigoletto* could be changed, with the locale transferred to Mantua, and the king demoted to a duke, one can hardly conceive of relocating Wagner's *Nüremberg* and calling the work "Le concours de Toulouse." This grotesque fantasy may suggest why Verdi's opera has a different and broader appeal, why it is more easily understood, and why it will outlive *Meistersinger*. Public identification with Rigoletto is not limited by ethnic borders, while Wagner's comedy is rooted firmly in German lore, and is based on premises that have to be known if there is to be more than a superficial appreciation of the work.

FOUR MASTERPIECES

The year 1781 (many years before Napoleon I put an end to castrato singing) was crucial for modern opera. Mozart had just finished *Idomeneo,* and was now embarked on a project he called "eine teutsche Oper," which became *Die Entführung aus dem Serail.* Mozart's stressing of the language—"teutsche Oper"—indicates that at the time it was an extraordinary action to compose a full-length stage play in anything but Italian. Today musicians consider it first of the four greatest opera scores ever written, and its *personae* return in various, but recognizable, disguises throughout the following 150

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years of the German repertoire. While academic nomenclature has tagged it *Singspiel* ("song-play"), defined as a sequence of musical pieces connected by spoken dialogue, this is an inadequate and misleading name. The *Singspiel* of composers Lortzing, Marschner, and Nicolai later became classical operetta, but Mozart's *Entführung* is not light comedy, but a Romantic piece like *Zauberflöte,* Beethoven's *Fidelio,* and Weber's *Freischütz.* All four, known to be significant works in German repertoire, owe their vitality and longevity to the German language. One-and-a-half centuries after they were premiered, *Zauberflöte* and *Freischütz* remain perennial favorites in theaters of Central Europe where German is spoken and understood. This "orbit" includes Holland, Switzerland, and Scandinavia. *Fidelio,* despite its initial lack of success in 1805, was an instant hit in the 1814 version, as attested by the large number of arrangements made of several of its pieces. Such transcriptions are the surest, if not the only, reliable sign of genuine success. To print Rocco's aria "for voice and guitar" can mean but one thing: it was popular. Similarly, some eleven pieces from the opera were transcribed and arranged for odd combinations of instruments, all intended for amateurs playing at home what they had heard and enjoyed in the theater.

Weber's *Freischütz,* first performed in 1820 in Berlin, was accepted for production by thirty-three German cities within eighteen months of its premiere. In opera houses outside the Germanic language orbit, both *Fidelio* and *Freischütz* were soon complemented with orchestral accompaniments to recitatives, replacing the dialogue, for grand opera in the nineteenth century did not accept spoken dialogue. Berlioz was only one among a number of less distinguished composers who concocted recitatives for Weber's opus, and, as late as 1939, New York's Metropolitan Opera planned a *Fidelio* revival with recitatives composed by its chief conductor Artur Bodanzky, whose death, however, canceled the production.

In our era of musical purism, which recognizes only what is, or what passes for, authenticity, dialogue has been restored, but without convincing results. *Entführung, Zauberflöte, Fidelio,* and *Freischütz,* the four masterpieces before Wagner, have all been subjected to grievous mistreatment internationally and even in Germany. After the dreadful *accompagnato* recitatives, stage directors transferred *Fidelio* into a commentary on the Third Reich. Others made

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Zauberflöte into "une interprétation psychanalytique" (as in the case of a Paris production with Sarastro as "le père castrateur"), and *Entführung* in Frankfurt in 1985 became an unrecognizable hodge-podge. Such were the vagaries of some new productions. A 1986 *Zauberflöte* from East Berlin approached Mozart and Schikaneder with a Marxist ax: the priests became capitalists, and Papageno-Papagena were portrayed as the downtrodden, exploited proletariat. Such operatic endeavors make one wonder whether these works can exist today on their own terms.

Shocked as I am by such misreadings, and astonished as I may be at the venality of opera managers who encourage this vandalism, my fifty-year acquaintance with a non-German operatic world convinces me that dialogue operas are no longer possible on the international circuit; indeed it is doubtful if they ever were. The names Mozart and Beethoven command so much reverence that few commentators, let alone laymen, have the courage to say that dialogue, either in impossible translations and abridgments, or in the original with a dozen foreign accents making hash of the words, has had its day. The theater of the absurd may have been realized when Covent Garden presented a bilingual *Fledermaus*—"hawf English" and "halb Weanerisch"—an eloquent message to the public that neither management nor performers cared very much about who understood what. If international opera houses were patronized only by genuinely interested spectators rather than by unmotivated subscribers, dialogue operas could no longer be given. That these operas, during their original runs, and for many years thereafter, did engage audiences, inviting them to identify with their characters, good and bad, is evident from the seminal nature of several *dramatis personae*, starting with *Entführung*.

Selim Bassa, conventionally presented as a cardboard figure, is in fact Sarastro's precursor. Both choose forgiveness over revenge; both nobly resign themselves to unrequited love. Hans Sachs, in *Meistersinger,* faces a similar conflict. Selim and Sarastro represent the best of eighteenth-century humanism; they are incarnations of the *deus ex machina,* a figure that in earlier plays resolved conflict and confusion. Don Fernando in the last scene of *Fidelio* is another true "descendant" of this type, as is the Hermit in *Freischütz*. Finally Lohengrin, transformed by Wagner from a cameo *deus ex machina*

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to the heroic lead, is the Romantic fulfillment of several models: lover, liberator, avenger, justice, and prophet.

The leading ladies, from Constanze on, are passive, noble, and innocent, all awaiting their liberation: Belmonte traveled far to find and free his bride; Tamino penetrated the enclave of a secret order to discover and liberate Pamina; Wagner employed the same motif, having Siegfried liberate Brünnhilde from her enforced sleep. All, too, share a magical instrument: a flute for Tamino; a horn for Weber's Oberon, and for Siegfried, which he plays in his passage through the fire. In *Lohengrin,* the magic horn appears toward the end of the opera, when the protagonist, taking leave of Elsa, presents her with three objects for her resurrected brother: a sword (nothing unusual about that), a horn (to continue the eighteenth-century motif that goes back to Wieland's poem *Oberon*), and a ring. This ring is not a wedding band; rather, it recalls Lessing's play, *Nathan der Weise,* in which a ring symbolizes truth. Finally, the Romantic plot prescribes the hero's trial, where he must prove himself: fire and water for Tamino; a shooting contest for Max in *Freischütz;* and fire, again, for Siegfried. In the comedy, *Meistersinger,* the trial is a song competition, with a lovely young girl as the prize. This lover-liberator motif is reversed in *Fidelio*, where the man is in jail and the wife the heroine. The libretto also introduces a novel and very bourgeois character into the gallery of *dramatis personae:* the mercenary father of a marriageable daughter. Rocco is so blindly infatuated with his new helper that he wishes to have him as son-in-law, knowing absolutely nothing of his background. Daland, in *Der fliegende Holländer* exhibits the same hasty judgment: a boatload of valuables seems quite sufficient reason for the captain to marry his daughter. In *Meistersinger,* Pogner, the father, is prepared to offer his child to the winner of the musical contest. Of all the operatic fathers, Faninal may be the most ridiculous. His one and only ambition is that the man should have a title; it matters not at all what he looks like, what his age is, or what his manners may be.

The change in the portrayal of heroines from the pure maidens of *Entführung, Zauberflöte,* Marzelline in *Fidelio,* Agatha in *Freischütz,* and Elisabeth and Elsa in Wagner's earlier works, to more erotic types, reflects not only a historical change, but also a difference between German and Italian mores. Mozart's Constanze and Pamina are found only in his "teutsche Opern": Susanna in *Figaro* is far from

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an innocent; Donna Anna is a rape victim; Elvira is an abandoned divorcée. What goes on in *Così fan tutte* between the two couples is anybody's guess, but it is not merely flirtatious. Eros prevails in all three of Mozart's Italian operas, while his two German works are morality plays without overt sexual emphasis.

Most operas with a noble, highminded couple (Constanze-Belmonte et al.) need as contrast and relief a funny couple (Blonde-Pedrillo, Papagena-Papageno, Marzelline-Jacquino), whose concerns are more earthy, who fight—though not too strenuously—and then make up, who are loyal servants and helpers of aristocrats. Later in the century, they become part of the general plot of most operettas.

Another comic character worth tracing is Osmin, the sixth and last role in *Entführung*. His "descendants" include Monostatos, Beckmesser, and Ochs von Lerchenau. All four attempt to win an unattainable woman. Their failure is in no way tragic; it is cause for general hilarity since they are nasty individuals, meant to antagonize the audience. It is worth noting that the first two of these "fall guys" are non-European, a Turk and a Moor. Later, because of middle-class standards, such characters become members of the same race and class as the rest of the cast.

Today's audiences might have more difficulty identifying with the Sprecher in *Zauberflöte* who informs Tamino: "ein Weib tut wenig, plaudert viel" (a woman does little, chatters much) or, with Sarastro who explains to Pamina why he took her away from her mother: "ein Mann muss Eure Herzen leiten, denn ohne ihn pflegt jedes Weib aus seinem Wirkungskreis zu schreiten" (a man must guide your hearts, since without him woman tends to transgress her own range). Imagine Gloria Steinem as stage director, and what she would do with Sarastro! Yet, to make a real change would be to misunderstand these operatic masterpieces. Sarastro is a humanist of the 1790s, the head of an order, later "reborn" as Josef Knecht in Hermann Hesse's *Magister Ludi*.

If, out of our contemporary type of enlightenment, so different from the eighteenth-century model, we permit the interpreter to become a critic and censor of Sarastro, it will serve neither Mozart's music, rendering it senseless, nor the vitality of the play. Such tampering will not convince the untutored, and it can only offend the educated. To take these works seriously, we must either forget about presenting them as opera, depriving the world of great musical

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utterances, or find a totally different style like Cocteau's opera-oratorio *Oedipus Rex,* which has a narrator instead of dialogue. As it is, German dialogue opera has not survived—either in undoctored form, or in gratuitous updating, with political text emendations. Seminal influences have come to full bloom in Wagner's works, which have retained their magic hold on an international operatic circuit.

RICHARD WAGNER

Mercenary elders are common in bourgeois literature; also, in bourgeois opera. The young Wagner created not only Daland, but several other father-figures, including the Landgraf in *Tannhäuser,* as disposed as Pogner in *Meistersinger* to offer his niece as a first prize in a song contest, and King Henry in *Lohengrin,* ready to bless Elsa's bridal bed, soon to be occupied by an incognito husband. While these four—Daland, Pogner, Landgraf, and King Henry—are minor roles, with Wotan we have a figure of much larger proportions, where Wagner's magic is fully developed. Prepared to leave his most beloved child (who only did what he himself secretly wished) asleep at the wayside, for anyone who comes by ("der am Wege sie findet und weckt"), one is reminded of *Fräulein Else* by Schnitzler, a story of a father who bargains away his daughter's virtue to pay his debts. The values of nineteenth-century middle-class Europe are admirably mirrored in such situations.

It is equally intriguing to follow Wagner's development of the lover-liberator motif. In *Holländer,* and in the operas that follow, love, sin, and other human indulgences attain metaphysical status. Aside from Elsa, who resembles the passive, innocent model of Constanze, Wagner's women are true heroines. Senta and Elisabeth die to redeem the "eternal" transgressions of the Dutchman and Tannhäuser, respectively. Brünnhilde, by her immolation, redeems not only her father, the god Wotan, but also his kingdom, which in this case is nothing less than the world. All such redemptions, including Isolde's love-death, are grandiose schemes which, surrounded by irresistibly erotic music, bring the public to a state of wish-fulfillment.

Wagner's heroes, with their flaws and sins, appeal much more to people's imaginations than do Mozart's more virtuous lover-

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liberators. When we use less grandiloquent language than the author, we find many characters redolent of the everyday world. Venus and Kundry, for example, are easily recognized as glorified madams. In a New York *Parsifal* performance in 1942, two young men in uniform were overheard to say at the moment when Flagstad as Kundry, lying on a couch, was pushed on stage: "Guess the girls didn't please him, so they sent the madam." Venus's "customer" is saved from the Pope's condemnation by a miracle, the flowering papal staff, and by Elisabeth's "love-death." Amfortas, who did not resist Kundry, is healed and redeemed by a boy, whose compassion and understanding came to him in a kiss from a woman who embodies the mother-mistress synthesis to perfection.

While I do not know if any psychoanalytical essay on Wagner's figures exists, it seems that even a most cursory acquaintance with Freud's *Kulturtheoretische Schriften* (theoretical essays on cultural subjects) makes clear Wagner's symbolism, as well as the wild reactions, hostile or appreciative, to which he has traditionally been subjected. Tristan betrays his father-figure and benefactor, Marke; Sieglinde commits adultery with her brother. Drugs are used in both instances to shorten theatrically the time between the first infatuation and consummation, and to be safe from the danger of the husband's waking too soon. In *Götterdämmerung* a drug is used to make Siegfried forget both his bride and his oath. Another drug is used in Act III to restore his memory—all of this to prevent heroes and heroines from appearing completely degenerate. Many "sins" appeal to the darker side of the unconscious: breach of contract is practiced by Wotan; theft is conspicuous in *Rheingold* and *Siegfried;* violent deaths are frequent—through premeditated killings in duels *(Tristan, Walküre),* through spontaneous disgust (Siegfried doing away with Mime), or through a stab in the back (Hagen, who later kills also his half-brother Gunther). Wotan is not only the father of the gods; he has nine illegitimate daughters and a wife who uses her knowledge to blackmail him to gain what she wants, having Sigmund killed. Her defense of marriage and conventional morality is unsympathetically rendered. These situations, with the participants disguised as gods and demi-gods, provide an accurate portrait of the double-standards prevalent in Wagner's world, and, indeed, in our own today.

However disconcerting this may be, Wagner's true magic may lie in his ability to comprehend the taboo dreams and desires of a

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severely repressed civilization. No other great composer has so many unmusical admirers, who flock to Bayreuth on annual pilgrimages, and fly hither and yon if there is the prospect of a new and promising *Tristan* or *Walküre* production. According to musicologists, there has yet to be written a strictly musical analysis of Wagner, the composer. There is, however, a large bibliography that lists essays on every aspect of his life, and learned treatises dealing with the music as it relates to the text—which is quite a different matter from fathoming how he put notes on the five staves.

It is in this context that the historic enmity of Brahmsians for Wagnerites, and vice versa, needs to be understood. It was not the music as such, but the diversion of the music from the "legitimate" purposes of the Beethoven tradition to new and unmentionable ones that so enraged Hanslick and others. For the "absolute" musician, the composer of chamber music, serenades, symphonies, and piano scores, music has no purpose beyond itself. While the famous "feud," like many others in the world of art (and of politics) was probably overpublicized, it in fact reflected a profound philosophical disagreement. It is now history, but it still serves to suggest how the work of two masters can represent the deep duality within one society that nurtured them both.

RICHARD STRAUSS

Of the fifteen operas composed by Richard Strauss, we can be sure that three (or perhaps four) are indispensable to any international repertoire. With the troika, *Salome, Elektra,* and *Rosenkavalier,* the composer made his outstanding, and probably lasting, contribution. All the remaining ten works suffer from inferior libretti.

It is generally accepted that the collaboration between Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Richard Strauss was most fruitful. Extending from 1907, with *Elektra*—actually a finished play when Strauss discovered and composed for it—until *Arabella,* and Hofmannsthal's death in 1929, the two produced *Rosenkavalier,* the two versions of *Ariadne, Frau ohne Schatten,* and *Aegyptische Helena.* Only Romain Rolland doubted that this was as fortunate a collaboration as everyone claimed. After *Frau ohne Schatten,* he wrote to Strauss, suggesting that Hofmannsthal's dramaturgy was more of a hindrance than a help. By that time, Strauss the musician had already retreated

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from the road of *Salome* and *Elektra*. Turning to Viennese comedy and to Molière's era was a counter-move against the trends shown by Mahler and Schoenberg and indeed by himself in the two one-act tragedies. Nineteen hundred and nine was the year when he made his U-turn. It was his respect for Mozart that produced—after *Rosenkavalier—Ariadne* and then a rewriting of *Zauberflöte,* which was the plan of Hofmannsthal and the composer. Among his other homages to Mozart was his scoring for three women's voices. His own characters, Elektra, Chrysothemis and Klytemnästra; Marschallin, Octavian, and Sophie; Ariadne, Composer, and Zerbinetta; Kaiserin, Farberin, and Amme, are all modeled on Mozart's own Countess, Susanna, and Cherubino; Anna, Elvira, and Zerlina; Fiordiligi, Dorabella, and Despina. Octavian and the Young Composer are also in the tradition of Cherubino—the very young man, full of passion, half *roué*, half innocent. Sailing under this bland "Return to the Golden Age of Mozart" flag, Strauss employed his ever-present, superb technique of composition to write an admirable work for a combination of *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* and *Ariadne* and, later, a new prologue replacing Molière's comedy. Hofmannsthal and Max Reinhardt visualized the Molière play in Hofmannsthal's German version, with the incidental music, ending with a party *chez* Jourdain at which a whole opera, *Ariadne auf Naxos,* would be performed. This plan was not a success, owing to the inherent incompatibility of theater and opera lovers. The first had no wish to hear ninety minutes of opera after two-and-a-half hours of spoken comedy; the second were uninterested in sitting through two-and-a-half hours of spoken comedy, in order to hear ninety minutes of singing. Hence the later (1916) version with the new Prologue, which also created the Young Composer, as endearing a figure as Cherubino.

Die Aegyptische Helena opens with the premise that the audience is familiar with several versions of the Trojan War. Its libretto is as difficult to summarize as *Il Trovatore,* with music that is not equal to Verdi's. *Arabella,* finally, is an attempt to find a sequel to *Rosenkavalier,* and it has had the fate of most sequels: indifferent reception. The premise that a young man, having obtained the key to a desired lady's bedroom, has a fine time without ever discovering that he is sleeping with someone else may be hilarious in a French farce. In this opera, with the action taking place behind closed curtains, behind the

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stage set, and during an orchestral prelude that is as weak a piece as the composer wrote, the results are embarrassing. It becomes yet worse when it is compared with its equivalent: Act I of *Rosenkavalier,* with its own "first night" between Octavian and the Marschallin.

Next came *Die schweigsame Frau,* a comedy with millions of notes that went nowhere. Strauss's final four operas, *Friedenstag, Daphne, Liebe der Danae,* and *Capriccio* had only one common denominator: non-theatrical plots. *Capriccio,* a "Konversationsstück" with a book by the conductor Clemens Krauss, was the most successful, simply because it was *sui generis,* making no claim of exceptional dramatic achievement. This work remains a fine essay on the interrelation and interdependence of words and music in opera, a unique old-age credo by a great master who earned the right to close fifteen operas with an elaborate soliloquy.

When Strauss produced *Salome* from a German translation of Oscar Wilde's play, he accomplished the extraordinary feat of emancipating himself from Wagner, while still including special Wagnerian elements. Combining theft, murder, breach of contract, and incest, he added some newly minted perversions of his own, including necrophilia, and he opened up the theme of sacrilege. The action starts with a look at a homosexual page, jealous of Narraboth's infatuation with Salome. Aside from her advances to the prophet, she is ogled and propositioned by her stepfather in the presence of her mother, who, haranguing her husband, reveals that he is the son of a camel driver and thief. An anecdote has a London subscriber turning to her neighbor at the point when Herodias and Herod bellow insults at each other, commenting: "How unlike the home-life of our own dear Queen!" With this lurid titillation came music that lasted from start to finish less time than the longest act of Wagner. Strauss had applied the lesson that orchestral compositions should not be in four movements but in one, which made him the *non plus ultra* of the symphonic poem, before he embarked with the same idea of condensation on opera: it need not have three acts; one was enough. After *Elektra,* which includes matricide among other post-Wagnerian themes, and which also confirmed the composer's genius, he applied some kind of brake, as suggested earlier, and moved away from such subjects.

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THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

No other composer of German opera was able to shake the shadow of Wagner; three of them—Schreker, Korngold, and Pfitzner—wrote between them at least another fifteen operas, of which none comes near Strauss's vital works. Schreker and Korngold had also found the need to incorporate unusual erotic titillation, but, easy to say in hindsight, it was all too obviously calculated, rather like some of the more questionable periodicals that hover between literature and pornography. Music for such texts cannot be sustained for long without becoming cloying.

Pfitzner went in the opposite direction, avoiding eros in most of his compositions. His *Palestrina,* subtitled "a musical legend," may be thought to represent the prototypical "vin du pays" opera. It dates from 1917, was conducted on its first night in Munich by Bruno Walter, and has since been included in the repertoire of all the larger German houses, but only for a handful of performances each year. In my student days, in Vienna's Staatsoper, it was given twice each season, before a half-full house, with priests and music students replacing subscribers. While in Vienna I never missed a production of *Palestrina,* and I had one of the great thrills of my long musical career when I conducted the work in the same house, where, forty-one years earlier, I had stood for the entire four-and-a-half hour performance seventy-five feet behind the conductor's podium.

The strength of the work lies in the contrast between the inner life of the artist, symbolized by Giovanni Pierluigi's struggle to compose, and the cold response prevailing at the Council of Trent, where the composition, commissioned to save the true church music from decline into banality, receives a one-sentence mention, when Borromeo says "Die Messe wird geschrieben."

The high point is reached late in Act I, when Pierluigi, left alone after a grievous misunderstanding with Borromeo, is visited by nine dead masters of music—from Josquin de Près on—who, in a sublime scene, inspire him to write the mass. For me and for a tiny group of sympathizers, this half of the act with the nine masters, followed by the onstage composition of the mass, constitutes a truly "memorable" moment in opera. The balance, consisting of at least another two hours of music has no more than a few fleeting passages of extraordinary quality, and I know that my devotion is unlikely to be

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translated and played in international revivals; the work is strictly for parochial consumption.

Surveying the German repertoire, it appears that Wagner led it into a cul-de-sac, from which it was rescued by the social revolution, following World War I. Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* and Kurt Weill's *Dreigroschenoper* were not only filled with genius and contemporary significance, they pointed the way to a vital musical theater, without ties to the previous century. The year 1933 and the incoming Nazi tyranny ended not only the Weimar Republic, it stymied the best creative talents, or forced them into an exile where they could not function without abandoning their principal interests; Weill is one prime example. Germany was not the only country hostile to these new ideas and sounds. Other countries also became artistically conservative, through a strong draft of crass mercantilism that had room for neither the experiments, nor for the social critique found in these new works. The Third Reich, during its twelve years, killed German opera, just as Napoleon had killed *opera seria*, but while one acted from humanitarian motives, the other effectively crushed freedom of expression.

It can be no coincidence that Schoenberg's *Moses and Aaron* and Alban Berg's *Lulu* remained fragments. They could be final, yet incomplete, "torsos" of an era spanning 154 years, from *Entführung* to the death of Berg. If I do not take into account the labors of Cerha, who finished the third act of *Lulu,* this is neither inadvertent nor meant to be censorious. The significant fact is that the composer did not, or could not, finish his work.

THE LATINS

The international opera circuit today resembles an informal cartel, presenting more or less the same leading singers, conductors, designers, and directors and, with some considerations of local pressures, the same basic repertoire. No more than twenty German works return regularly, of which ten are by Wagner. A count of French works, with *Carmen* and *Faust* as flagships, would hardly reach ten titles. There is no French composer equal to either of the giants, Verdi and Wagner. The problem is compounded by the notorious difficulty of singing in French, which, unlike the other major opera languages, German and Italian, has never been mastered by foreigners. Since

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French composers chose some of the greatest literary masterpieces for their libretti, the poor quality of that repertoire cannot be caused by inferior plays; indeed, it may be caused by the opposite: composers were too ambitious, and chose subjects above their creative capabilities. Ambroise Thomas went "right to the top of Olympus," using *Hamlet,* and Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meister* for *Mignon.* Massenet also used Goethe's *Werther* and composed a *Don Quixote.* Goethe's *Faust* seems to have been more accommodating; Berlioz did it nobly, though with a caveat, calling the piece an opera-oratorio; its success lies in this latter guise. Gounod, whose *Faust* has remained an international hit, also composed *Romeo,* which, like Bellini's, cannot be accepted by Shakespeare readers, since the poetry of the author's verses becomes laughable when Juliet starts in on roulades and cadenzas. Such *coloratura* is easily associated with frivolity, which makes a Manon acceptable, and a Juliet unacceptable. *Samson and Delilah* will be with us as long and as often as there is a popular contralto who fancies herself a Mata Hari. Aside from the difficulties of singing French, the basic problem of the repertoire seems to be the ambivalence of composers like Gounod, Massenet, and Thomas, who hover constantly over an imaginary fence that divides opera from operetta. Jacques Offenbach gave us a masterpiece in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann,* but for the rest of his life stayed with the lighter genre where he was not only more at home, but where he achieved an unparalleled, long success, extending far beyond the borders of France.

Verdi, to date, is the only composer capable of matching Shakespeare's genius when using his plays. Even Wagner only once adopted a Shakespeare piece, *Measure for Measure,* for *Liebesverbot.* With unfailing instinct he left the bard alone after that. Altogether, Verdi's selections are first-rate plays, but it took him time to grow until he became the peer, not only of Shakespeare, but of Schiller as well. *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* was used for *Giovanna d'Arco* (rarely if ever revived today); *Die Räuber* for *I masnadieri* (again, rarely played now); *Kabale und Liebe (Luisa Miller),* was recently brought back in several major houses, including the Metropolitan in New York. Finally, with Verdi's 1867 *Don Carlo* we find the supreme master.

The Shakespeare-Verdi connection itself needs little comment. In 1847, Verdi learned from the Florentine impresario who had com-

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missioned him that the roster consisted of several well-known singers, yet lacked a first tenor. Familiar with the virtues and deficiencies of available talent, he decided that the libretto could not be based on a love story, so he and the librettist arrived at the decision to try *Macbeth*. He was only thirty-four then, and, after tackling Shakespeare once, he waited decades before attempting *Otello* and *Falstaff*. For those later works he had a great collaborator in Arrigo Boito; it may be heresy to suggest that he, a composer, made better libretti than many professional writers. From even this small selection of great books adapted as opera texts, there is only one conclusion to be drawn: great plays and great novels do not great composers make.

Since major opera houses today perform regularly at least twice as many Italian operas as German and French operas combined, and since certain of the musical scores are pot-boilers of the most banal type (by popular composers Ponchielli, Leoncavallo, Mascagni, and Giordano), some criterion other than excellence must explain why they survive, and why they retain the loyalty of a large public. Perhaps Puccini's great triumphs, and the constant showing of some of his works may provide a clue to the nature of irresistible operatic plots. As language *per se* loses meaning for the public, through larger auditoriums and the growing orchestral role, distorting or concealing the words, the visual understanding of the situations onstage becomes all the more important. Exotic settings, as in *Madama Butterfly* and in *Turandot* (perhaps even the Far West in *La Fanciulla del West*), give at once a visual message, answering at least one question: where are we? It is a moot point whether *Aïda*'s *dramatis personae* were invented to celebrate the Suez Canal, or whether Verdi felt that the visual contrast of Copts and black Ethiopians would stress visual over linguistic communication. Yet, visual confusion, to illustrate the other side of the issue, has prevented some of the most glorious Verdi scores from achieving their deserved status with the public. Without having read the libretto carefully, it is impossible to follow the relationship between the young Boccanegra and Fiesco. It is even more difficult to suspend disbelief when Alvaro "disarming himself, throws away his pistol which accidently kills the Marchese."

Opera fans of my own generation, and of an earlier time, will recall that for many years fewer Verdi operas were performed than is now the case. It took several determined artists, among them the author Franz Werfel, to open the stages of internationally oriented houses to

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more than six to eight Verdi pieces. The inconclusive evidence of longevity is illustrated by a comparison of Verdi's operas regularly performed sixty years ago, with those produced today. At that time, there was no regular showing of *Macbeth, Ernani, Vespri Siciliani,* or *Luisa Miller* and, in Vienna, no *Forza,* no *Simon Boccanegra* or *Don Carlo,* which had to await the imprimatur of Franz Werfel's own translations and adaptations to be accepted for performance. Incredible as it may seem in 1986, it required enterprising managers to extend the Verdi repertoire beyond the four works that have been and remain today as popular and well-known as any music can ever be: *La Traviata, Rigoletto, Il Trovatore,* and *Aïda.*

INTERNATIONAL OPERA

The process of enlarging the repertoire started in the 1930s, when air transport began gradually to change the rules and problems of casting opera. When a Bulgarian tenor was discovered by an enterprising agent from Germany, where most repertoire houses are located, and where the largest number of singers are needed, he had to learn his roles in German, or in any one of the twenty languages that were the rule in European opera lore. In the *Annals* one can read precisely when *Tosca* was translated into Lithuanian, Hebrew, and eighteen other languages between 1902 and 1925. If the tenor was good, he would discover that his German Manrico was useless for La Scala, the Palais Garnier, or the Metropolitan. With ease of transport, however, performances in the original language became a matter of course. A few festivals began to do their casting from several countries, and they performed those works that previously had been done in the vernacular in Italian. Salzburg was among the first to perform Mozart with an international cast of singers. The system soon spread to regular winter seasons. Its combination of practicality, convenience, and artistic rectitude guaranteed its success. Whether the eloquent pleas for original languages were genuine or not is scarcely germane; vernacular for opera is now the rule only in third-rate provincial companies.

Italian opera, and not only by the masters Verdi and Puccini, has done best during this period of internationalization. The language is by far the most appropriate for *cantabile* (singable) works, and it is easier to pronounce than any of the others. Today, the "elegant" and

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"snobbish" solution is to sing everything in the original. This reaches a point of absurdity when Russian and Czech works are taught by rote to chorus members and solo singers who have no idea of their meaning. If one does not know a language profoundly and intimately, one cannot color the voice to express the words. Today, the entire question is merely another expression of social stratification: where one finds two companies, the expensive one plays in the original, the less expensive one in translation. Lead singers with major reputations perform in the original; others, in the vernacular. One of the upper echelon's punishments for this insistence on authentic language is the increasing number of high-priced singers, with incomprehensible histrionic vagaries. In the great houses there seems to be no problem of total suspension of disbelief, and priority is placed entirely on vocal prowess. When Tosca will not even pretend to jump, and walks off into the wings, who needs a libretto or a stage director? And when La Scala produces *Eugene Onegin* in the original language with an Italian Tatiana, an American Lensky, and an English Onegin, all under a Japanese conductor, none of them familiar with Russian, it becomes manifestly clear that nobody really cares what the whole piece is about. What then is the role and importance of the third criterion: the quality of the complete score?

THE MUSICAL SCORE

Musicians have always been unhappy with the knowledge that their evaluations of operas as compositions may not be shared by the general public. If we poll a group of professional musicians with the question, "Which Verdi opera is the best composition?" a large majority will vote for *Falstaff,* and a sizeable minority for *Otello.* If a similar question is put to regular subscribers of a great opera house, the majority will probably vote for *Aïda.*

For music lovers who have not studied musical composition, it may be difficult to accept that there are judgments that go beyond subjective likes and dislikes. Theoreticians and many musicologists have failed to advance a general awareness that music is composed according to laws, and that it is possible to call a piece better or worse.

Mozart, in a letter to his father written at the time of the composition of *Entführung,* explains how he was aware of his

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methods, and what their ultimate effects were intended to be. The letter, more enlightening than a hundred pages of criticism, illustrates what the music is intended to express. Mozart writes:

MON TRÈS CHER PÈRE! VIENNE, *ce 26 de Septembre*, 1781

Forgive me for having made you pay an extra heavy postage fee the other day. But I happened to have nothing important to tell you and thought that it would afford you pleasure if I gave you some idea of my opera. As the original text began with a monologue, I asked Herr Stephanie to make a little arietta out of it—and then to put in a duet instead of making the two chatter together after Osmin's short song. As we have given the part of Osmin to Herr Rischer, who certainly has an excellent bass voice (in spite of the fact that the Archbishop told me that he sang too low for a bass and that I assured him that he would sing higher next time), we must take advantage of it, particularly as he has the whole Viennese public on his side. But in the original libretto Osmin has only this short song and nothing else to sing, except in the trio and the finale; so he has been given an aria in Act I, and he is to have another in Act II. I have explained to Stephanie the words I require for this aria—indeed I had finished composing most of the music for it before Stephanie knew anything whatever about it. I am enclosing only the beginning and the end, which is bound to have a good effect. Osmin's rage is rendered comical by the accompaniment of the Turkish music. In working out the aria I have given full scope now and then to Fischer's beautiful deep notes (in spite of our Salzburg Midas). The passage "Drum beim Barte des Propheten" is indeed in the same tempo, but with quick notes; but as Osmin's rage gradually increases, there comes (just when the aria seems to be at an end) the allegro assai, which is in a totally different measure and in a different key; this is bound to be very effective. For just as a man in such a towering rage oversteps all the bounds of order, moderation and propriety and completely forgets himself, so must the music too forget itself. But as passions, whether violent or not, must never be expressed in such a way as to excite disgust, and as music, even in the most terrible situations, must never offend the ear, but must please the hearer, or in other words must never cease to be *music*, I have gone from F (the key in which the aria is written), not into a remote key, but into a related one, not, however, into its nearest relative D minor, but into the more remote A minor. Let me now turn to Belmonte's aria in A major, "O wie ängstlich, o wie feurig". Would you like to know how I have expressed it—and even indicated his throbbing heart? By the two violins playing octaves. This is the favourite aria of all those who have heard it, and it is mine also. I wrote it expressly to suit Adamberger's voice. You feel the trembling—the faltering—you see how his throbbing breast begins to swell; this I have expressed by a crescendo. You

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hear the whispering and the sighing—which I have indicated by the first violins with mutes and a flute playing in unison.

The Janissary chorus is, as such, all that can be desired, that is, short, lively and written to please the Viennese. I have sacrificed Constanze's aria a little to the flexible throat of Mlle. Cavalieri, "Trennung war mein banges Los und nun schwimmt mein Aug' in Tränen". I have tried to express her feelings, as far as an Italian bravura aria will allow it. I have changed the "Hui" to "schnell", so it now runs thus—"Doch wie schnell schwand meine Freude". I really don't know what our German poets are thinking of. Even if they do not understand the theatre, or at all events operas, yet they should not make their characters talk as if they were addressing a herd of swine. Hui, sow!

Now for the trio at the close of Act I. Pedrillo has passed off his master as an architect—to give him an opportunity of meeting his Constanze in the garden. Bassa Selim has taken him into his service. Osmin, the steward, knows nothing of this, and being a rude churl and a sworn foe to all strangers, is impertinent and refuses to let them into the garden. It opens quite abruptly—and because the words lend themselves to it, I have made it a fairly respectable piece of real three-part writing. Then the major key begins at once pianissimo—it must go very quickly—and wind up with a great deal of noise, which is always appropriate at the end of an act. The more noise the better, and the shorter the better, so that the audience may not have time to cool down with their applause.

I have sent you only fourteen bars of the ouverture, which is very short with alternate fortes and pianos, the Turkish music always coming in at the fortes. The ouverture modulates through different keys; and I doubt whether anyone, even if his previous night has been a sleepless one, could go to sleep over it. Now comes the rub! The first act was finished more than three weeks ago, as was also one aria in Act II and the drunken duet *(per i signori viennesi)* which consists entirely of *my Turkish tattoo*. But I cannot compose any more, because the whole story is being altered—and, to tell the truth, at my own request. At the beginning of Act III there is a charming quintet or rather finale, but I should prefer to have it at the end of Act II. In order to make this practicable, great changes must be made, in fact an entirely new plot must be introduced—and Stephanie is up to the eyes in other work. So we must have a little patience.[2]

Nobody can decide why one listener finds the aria of Leonora in *Il Trovatore* known as "Miserere" superior or more memorable than "Pace, pace mio Dio," which is also sung by Leonora in *La forza del destino*. No attempt along these lines is possible. One can, however, explain why one piece is a better composition than another. An aria

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consisting of a melodic line given to the voice, accompanied by appropriate harmonies in orchestral passages consisting of arpeggios *(Pace, pace),* or of a constant exciting rhythmic pattern *(Di quelle pira),* or by instruments following the voice in unison, is inferior as a composition to one that has obbligato solo passages in one or more instruments. Mozart has "Martern aller Arten" accompanied by a quartet of four solo instruments and the full orchestra; in *Figaro* several pieces feature wind soli; a clarinet solo competes with Cherubino's voice, oboe and bassoon with the Countess and Susanna in the letter duet, three woodwinds are interwoven in Susanna's "Deh vieni, non tarder . . . . " Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* is accompanied by a much feared and respected cello solo, and in *Zauberflöte* the magical instrument is "played" by Tamino while he pauses in his singing. A list of similar pieces, distinguished by an intimate competition of voice and instrument(s) could also be mentioned. Such compositions are, all things being equal, superior to the voice with vamp only. Verdi himself used the obbligato instrument to telling effect in "Corteggiani, vil razza," a bravura cello solo, and again in "Domiro sol" *(Don Carlo).* In ensemble composition, the level of artful voice setting depends on the diversity, and variety, given to the ensemble members. The sextet in *Lucia* is less involved and less sophisticated than the quintet in *Meistersinger.* As composition the latter is superior to the former, though Donizetti has found an unforgettable tune that can be whistled or sung without any accompaniment, an impossibility with the quintet music of Wagner, who works instruments in with voices in such a way that any attempt to do it *a cappella* is unsuccessful.

For the first decades of nineteenth-century opera, the continuity alternates between recitative and set pieces. Later, the recitative with keyboard accompaniment disappeared, and more care was taken to do something dramatically significant with the passages between set-pieces. Here lies the great quality difference between the masters and the journeymen.

If one wished to study this particular development at its most stunning, one need only follow the chronological progression of Verdi's compositions. With *Falstaff,* his final piece, he reached a seamless continuity rare in any composer's operas. There is no distinction between set pieces and recitative. While one can make the same claim of smooth continuity lasting two-and-a-half hours for

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Rheingold, it consists only of recitative, with hardly any *melos* rising above declamation. In contrast, *Falstaff* is an amalgamation of the two basic elements that have defined opera for nearly three hundred years.

Parsifal is perhaps Wagner's most seamless work. Nothing can be excerpted; even the Prelude needs some concocted ending for concert use, and the famous "Good Friday spell" is an arrangement and condensation of the scene, minus the voices of the two singers. The long score is a continuous composition, with that uncanny mixture of declamatory and arioso treatment of the voice parts. Notwithstanding the wide gap between *Falstaff,* a Shakespearean comedy, and the *Bühnenweihfestspiel* (Wagner's own title, meaning a sacramental stage festival play), both composers paid for the seamless continuity with the loss of genuine inventions for solo or ensemble numbers. A parallel can be found in nature: a *Trovatore* or a *Tristan* resemble alternating peaks and valleys, while the seamless masterpieces mentioned proceed like a mesa on a high, exquisite plateau, with hardly an apex anywhere. Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* belongs to this small and exclusive club, only more radically so, through its avoidance of any set pieces and ensembles.

The final fugue in *Falstaff,* Verdi's "calling-card" showing that he could also emulate Bach when he wanted, is, like the final septet of *Don Giovanni,* a coda without dramatic significance. A dramatic ensemble, probably never equalled, is the finale of Act II in Mozart's *Figaro:* here every portion of the fifteen minute piece is marked by an increment in the vocals, from duet to septet, via trio and quartet, and all the while the action itself is advanced. This portion stands in splendid isolation, since most other great ensemble pieces take place when the action is halted. A small selection of the best ensemble compositions in opera would include: everything by Mozart, the Canon in *Fidelio,* the prestissimo in *l'Italiana in Algeri,* the quartet in *Rigoletto,* the trio in *Rosenkavalier,* the *Meistersinger* quintet, the scene of the nine masters in Act I of *Palestrina,* several large ensembles in Verdi's works, and especially the triumphal scene from *Aïda,* where three sharply profiled themes (the chant of the priests, the triumphal march, and the soaring cantilena of the high solo voices) are joined in a masterly counterpoint, quite similar to the moment in the prelude to the *Meistersinger* where three themes appear together in a splendid climax. It is often mentioned with some

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acerbity that musicians of German background extol polyphonic composition beyond reason. True or false, the examples from Verdi's operas show that an Italian master of genius found polyphony an appropriate climax on several occasions.

Avoiding technical language, opera composition consists of inventing highlights of a memorable character, with "stuffing" in between. More and better highlights will be popular in wider circles, and assure a longer life to an opera as a whole. The quality of the stuffing is more dependent on the libretto than on the musical inventiveness of the composer. The best example of that thesis can be found in Richard Strauss. His supreme facility with notes enabled him to make appropriate sounds with very little substance. In his three major works, stuffing escapes undue notice thanks to the brevity of the one-act plays *Salome* and *Elektra,* and in *Rosenkavalier* by the continuous charm and humor of the stage action. Indeed, Strauss probably has the largest amount of stuffing in his stage works, compared to the other prominent composers of the era. Wagner, too, depends on filler music, particularly in expository scenes of the *Ring:* Wotan's long narration in Act II, *Walküre,* the two Alberich scenes in *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung,* and the Gibichungen scene prior to Siegfried's arrival. Quite different in compositorial value and art are the expository scenes in Act I of *Siegfried* (Wanderer-Mime), and the Norns in the Prologue of *Götterdämmerung.*

SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

If the panorama of nineteenth-century opera shows a puzzling contrast between the German and Latin sides, it is probably due to two developments: an unparalleled wealth of instrumental music in sonata and symphony, emphasizing chamber music ever more and, connected with it, the fast growth of the piano as an indispensable part of a bourgeois household. This put a premium on the production of vocal chamber music, otherwise known as the *Lied.* German composers wrote more *Lieder* and fewer operas. The four eminent masters of the *Lied,* Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, and Wolf, could not create between them one opera that lived; Brahms never even tried. Poets of the Romantic era produced irresistible verses, and the musical emphasis on home activity contributed to an avalanche of great songs from those four composers and from lesser masters.

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Chamber music, and even orchestral symphonies, did not seem to have taken up much time of Italian and French composers. Only toward the end of the century, when the great poets Baudelaire, Verlaine, Mallarmé, et al. made their impact, did *chansons* by Duparc, Debussy, Ravel, and Poulenc appear. Here too, the song composers did not excel particularly in opera. A *Lied* (or *chanson*), accompanied by one keyboard instrument, is vocal chamber music when compared to the demands made on opera singing. Just as the great *Lieder* creators did not find opera congenial, so does the reverse hold true: hardly any songs were composed by the Italian masters of the *teatro lirico*.

Writing music for the voice is then the central issue. Since all vocal music must act symbiotically with the words, vocal style is influenced, if not to say inspired, by the type of text before the composer. As the German Romantic composers drew from the poets Goethe, Mörike, Eichendorff, and others, as their song cycles became available in music stores for the pleasure of *Hausmusik,* Mozart's *teutsche Oper* (or *Singspiel*) entered the amusement sector of the music establishment, and became operetta. Here we come full circle in demonstrating why only three or four specimens of that genre survived by dint of the names Mozart, Beethoven, and, to a lesser degree, Weber.

This split, placing the "serious" composers of the German orbit into the camp of instrumental and vocal chamber music, never occurred on the Italian side of the Alps. Perhaps the curious preference of Latin composers for German drama and Goethe novels was due to the fact that in Germany the classics, such as Schiller and Shakespeare, were virtually part of everyday drama repertoire, hence composers neither needed, nor dared, to rely on plays that had a vitality of their own. The verse plays were presented in a style that was heightened recitation, not too far from pitched singing. I remember the actors who played "die jungen Helden"—the young heros—Max Piccolomini, Mortimer, and Marquis Posa with stentorian exertions, projecting the noblest sentiments of their roles. Only ideal Italian tenors could be selected to make a similar impact on an audience. Italian opera never experienced any "defections" from important composers. There is no symphonic repertoire, nor chamber music out of Italy, and anyone looking for Italian contributions must go back to the Baroque era when Vivaldi and others flooded the music world with an encyclopedic variety of pleasant musical enter-

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tainment. Both *opera seria* and *opera buffa* continued, undisturbed by the schism, into the nineteenth century and, as we see today, have lasted better than the more problematic German repertoire.

The lack of a strong representation of Slavic operas on the international stage stems from the same parochialism that derailed the German *Singspiel.* Three Smetana operas were popular for a time, particularly in Vienna, where Mahler favored *Bartered Bride.* But by 1950, the only occasional representatives of the Slavic orbit were Moussorgsky's *Boris Godunov,* and its revisions, and the Tschaikovsky operas, because of the composer's recognizable magic touch.

International survival of any operative work, regardless of its standard and rating by experts, depends most on the quality of its memorable moments. The total composition is of concern only to the professionals and others who are musically initiated. The importance of the libretto, however, has declined over generations of spectators who no longer find it compelling to participate emotionally in Rigoletto's grief or in Cio-Cio-San's tragedy.

Modern stage directors indulge in philosophical, cultural, sociological, and political prefaces, statements, and interviews to explain what Mozart, Wagner, or Puccini "meant." All these *obiter dicta—if* taken seriously—aim to reinvolve a public that has lost the identification and compassion indispensable to opera if it is to be the total experience it was intended to be. There are many sublime scores, and many attractive scores, which, given the right treatment, would bring the public back into the environment out of which each of these works emerged.

ENDNOTES

[1] Alfred Loewenberg, *Annals of Opera*, 2nd ed. (Geneva: Societas Bibliografica, 1955).

[2] "Mozart to his Father," *The Letters of Mozart,* vol. 1, 2nd ed., trans. Emily Anderson (London: Macmillan, 1938). Reproduced by permission of Macmillan, London and Basingstoke.

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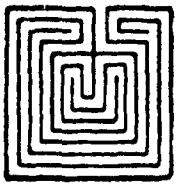
VOICES FROM NEW YORK

● Matthew Epstein ● Kitty Carlisle Hart ●
● Harvey Lichtenstein ●



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New York, whatever its distinction in other of the arts, remains today incontestably one of the major world centers of opera. This is not to say, however, that all goes well with opera in Gotham. It seemed important, for many reasons, to tell the New York story, and to do so by interviewing at least a few of those who were not present at the Wheatland conference in Venice, whose opinions might supplement, amplify, or contest views expressed there. The interviews, conducted in New York, were inspired by sentiments not much different from those expressed by Richard Wagner in 1879; he wrote at the time:

There will, after all, not be much to learn from my jottings of today. My advice, in particular, will prove quite useless. Indeed under no circumstances would I pretend to teach how men should create; I wish merely to guide them to a knowledge of how the made and the created should be rightly understood. Even for this a really lasting intercourse is necessary; for only by examples, examples, and again examples, is anything to be made clear, and eventually something learnt. To give effective examples, however, in our domain, we need musicians, singers, finally an orchestra.

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Matthew Epstein

Daedalus: **How is one to talk about the future of opera?**

Matthew Epstein: There are two related subjects: opera and music theater. Music theater is a controversial term. Some people fear that it will replace traditional opera, but it can never do so. Opera is what it is—a romantic art form, of a past era, which reaches into the present; music theater is an art form of our time. We must talk about both, about the creation of works, and the recreation of works written one, two, and three hundred years ago. The subjects have some crossover; they also have distinct areas of divergence. I do not think that the Broadway pieces of Sondheim, for example, are "opera." I often wonder if the works by Philip Glass should be called opera. They certainly are valid music theater works, and should be performed in the repertory of many opera companies.

The question, as far as I'm concerned, is very clear: how do we sustain the great works of the past—do we necessarily have to establish "a repertoire," or is that repertoire constantly changing? Is it changing because artists of any given era determine the repertoire that should be done? When you have a Maria Callas, a Joan Sutherland, a Marilyn Horne, or a Beverly Sills, a Regine Crespin or a Jessye Norman, a certain number of operas, which otherwise would be left in obscurity, suddenly become realistic and right to do. How do we find a repertoire that works for today, or for five years from now, as opposed to playing the so-called standard repertoire constantly? You don't necessarily find a cast to sing *Tosca* today; yet, for the past fifty years, *Tosca* has been a stable repertory opera. That doesn't mean we don't have good singers; it means that we can't easily do *Tosca.* Twenty-five years ago you couldn't have done a well-cast *La Donna del Lago* or *Otello* by Rossini—two very beautiful works, which have recently rejoined the international repertoire after a century of obscurity.

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Daedalus: **You're not simply saying that we don't have the voices of yesterday; you're saying something more than that.**

Matthew Epstein: We *do* have the voices, but they aren't necessarily the same *kind* of voices. For example, during the period from 1920 until 1940 there was a great explosion of Wagnerian voices. In the next eight or ten years there will again be a large number of Wagnerian singers, in the United States and Europe, such as there hasn't been since the prime of Nilsson, Vickers, and Rysanek twenty years ago. The Verdi repertoire, difficult to cast for some time, will be artistically viable again because there will be a group of singers who will sing it well. We have seen the emergence of the United States—and, I should say, the North American continent—as a hotbed of operatic talent; it is a cultural-historical fact that European operatic culture began to atrophy because of losses suffered during the Second World War, but also because many major European talents—artists from Germany, Austria, Italy, and France—moved to the United States and began to teach.

The generation of singers that is emerging now may be seen to have a connection with the generation that came here forty to fifty years ago. We now have an enormously talented group of singers, but the United States is in a peculiar position, created only in part by our popular culture—the fact that we all watch TV and films, and listen to popular music is true of much of the rest of the world as well—in that we lack an operatic language of our own. Because we are English-speaking, all our singers are not only required to know Italian, French, and German, but are expected to sing *all* of them perfectly. There are many complete operatic performers—American artists who can act, sing, dance, and speak three languages—but few have an authentic, in-depth style in any one language. In other words, we lack the "authentic" German, French, or Italian style natural to someone who speaks the language from birth.

The quality of talent in the United States is absolutely unique. If you look at the roster of most major international theaters, the American presence is clear. American singers now dominate the market in a way that they never did in the past. In the fifties, there were many central-European (German, Czechoslovakian, and Austrian) operatic figures; this was also the time when there were many Italian singers. In 1955, the market was indeed dominated by Italian

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and middle-European singers. Then, twenty years ago, in the mid-sixties, there was a groundswell of British artists, who quite suddenly moved into international prominence. There were always a number of wonderful American singers, even before the time of Farrar and Ponselle, but it is the postwar generation, born after 1945, maturing in the 1970s, that is now singing throughout the world. The most talented are singing in the biggest theaters, the major opera houses of the world, but Americans also appear in most small theaters in Germany, and, of course, all across this country. We now have a strong regional network here, which did not exist before 1960.

Very often now, singers choose to stay in the United States. It is possible for an artist with a smallish voice and good appearance and stage manner to develop in this country. Someone who can sing a beautiful Susanna in *Figaro* or Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* will have a chance to make a good career without ever leaving the United States. However, if someone is ungainly, fat, ugly, unsure of his or her stage presence, with a big, gorgeous voice, appropriate for Wagner and Verdi roles, it can be difficult to be engaged in this country. Also, an American opera company will rarely take a chance on a very young unknown artist in a title or leading role; in Germany, that artist may be able to gain two or three years of operatic experience, which will then bring admission into the major repertoire. Many of the big voices and very talented artists have been told from the conservatory level that they *must* go to Europe. And they do.

What is the significance of Germany for opera today?

The German theater system of full, year-round theaters does enormous good for what I call "routine"; it can also sometimes ruin artists. There is "good routine"; there is also "bad routine." Critics often call an artist a "routine artist," or criticize a "routine performance." Such words are not intended as compliments. However, in our profession, we often use the same word, "routine," to identify someone who knows his craft well, who is able to step on a stage and hold that stage in a vital role, relaxed and calm, knowing how to present himself or herself to best effect. The two types of routine must be balanced. American artists who stay too long in Germany can become routine in the negative sense. They need to get out, become international in six, eight, or ten years.

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It was said in Venice that the voices are not sufficient for the houses, for the stadia that are so common today.

The American "bigger is better" theory has been extremely harmful to voices. An opera house should have 2,000 seats, maximum; the optimum is in the range of 1,200 to 1,500. For various reasons, it is very difficult to fund such reasonably sized theaters in the United States. On the other hand, there are moves now to create small-scale theaters—in conjunction with major theaters. Houston is building one; Washington has one; San Francisco is working with one.

You talk about the "network of opera houses" in this country. What is it like?

In this country there are forty or fifty opera companies, not many less than in central Europe, but there most companies perform full-time. West Germany has more opera per capita than does the United States. In this country a regional opera company will rarely operate six or seven nights a week, and will generally not play a repertory. What most do—except for the Metropolitan—is play one opera at a time; they rehearse and produce it, play it two, three, or four times. Even in the biggest theaters—San Francisco or Chicago—an opera is produced, with full cast and conductor, played six, seven, or eight times, and is then finished. An artist does not generally stay the whole year with one company but only for an agreed period, for a specific opera and role. Working for a regional company, artists stay for three weeks, do four or five performances, and go on to the next opera company and the next role. In Europe there is stability: you come to know the musical and staging staff, and other colleagues; you play a repertory within a theater, and begin to know those productions very well. In this country, when taking a new role, an artist may learn it, rehearse it, and perform it twice, and then not sing it again for five years. In Germany, you may expect to play it ten to twenty times in a period of two years because it remains in the repertory.

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What about touring companies in America?

There *are* touring companies; they appeal to very young singers principally. There are Western Opera Theater, Texas Opera Theater, and other companies that tour with smaller productions. They can provide a terrific experience, but most touring companies—very reasonably—will only do a lighter repertoire. This brings me back to the kind of artist that can make a career nationally. Touring companies will do Rossini, Mozart, perhaps *La Bohème;* but you won't see them attempt *Walküre* on the road, or *Rosenkavalier,* or *Ariadne auf Naxos.* Anybody who wants to sing that kind of repertory has no choice but to go to Germany.

Is there a kind of unspoken hierarchy among these companies?

In our country we have such a feeling of inferiority about our art and artists that we think singing at Aachen has more status than singing at St. Louis. Truthfully, singing at St. Louis is probably of better artistic quality than singing at Aachen, or Graz. Still, performing at Rouen or Catania is thought to be a better artistic credit for an artist than singing in Omaha, Las Vegas, or in other American cities.

On a world basis today, there is an enormous range of experience open to an artist. There are theaters where artists rehearse for two or three days and then perform. There are other places where rehearsals go on for six weeks with excellent producers and conductors. Sometimes, artists slave for six weeks with a terrible producer. These are wholly different experiences, and the promise of the experience is very important to an operatic artist. If an artist is asked to work with Patrice Chéreau, Peter Brook, or Giorgio Strehler, these directors may demand that the opera be rehearsed for eight weeks, but the integrity of the process will make the artist happy to spend the six or eight weeks that those gentlemen require. An artist has to weigh the artistic quality of a project, the ability to earn income, to advance his or her career, whichever it is that the artist feels he or she needs at that moment. An artist is faced with a lot of questions at the beginning: what do I do, what is the right move? He or she needs to seek advice from other colleagues—individuals in management, heads of opera companies, conductors, directors. A smart artist, ambitious and

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talented, who is going to have a major career, will generally create a network of advisers to help.

What is one to say about the new trends in opera production?

In terms of the *production* of opera, there are new styles, where directors take the operas to pieces and create a new vision of them—create an all but new work, based on the old work. That is being done a great deal in Germany, Belgium, Holland, and France, more perhaps than in England and the United States. We are more conservative in our production of opera.

I believe that we're on the verge of finding a new style for opera productions. The very conservative style of production is now an anachronism. Our culture no longer accepts opera as a "stand up and sing" affair. A revolution, started in the fifties, is now being completed. It was begun by Callas, and the revolutionary work she did at La Scala with Visconti; by Wieland Wagner and what he accomplished at Bayreuth; and by Rudolph Bing, who decided to bring Tyrone Guthrie, Margaret Webster, Peter Brook, Alfred Lunt, and Garson Kanin—a major group of legitimate theater artists—to the Metropolitan Opera. This began in 1950, followed up by the coming of Zefferelli, Rennert, Strehler, then Ponnelle and Chéreau in our day. A shift towards strengthened theatrical vision in operatic performance has occurred as audiences have become more demanding visually. There are a whole group of new European directors, led by Chéreau, Stein, and Bondy, who really are the "new school," and have yet to be seen in the United States.

When you speak of conservative, what does that mean?

Literal, pictorial. Though I do not care to see *Tosca* in any other period but the one intended by Puccini, I might be interested in seeing a *Traviata* or an *Aïda* done in an entirely different way. The arrival of theater and cinema producers in the opera house is creating a very large shift. There is the theory that opera should not be taken literally, for what it says on the page, but should be a starting point for an original expression.

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Are we seeing productions here comparable to those in Europe?

Very rarely. Theaters here are unwilling to spend the money—or the time—to take the risk. The critical atmosphere of this country is reactionary to a point where it is stultifying. The critical community in the country must be held responsible for this conservatism. A perfect example is Jean-Pierre Ponnelle who sits at the top of an empire. In the profession for thirty years, now in his late fifties, he is very successful, in demand all over the world. But in Vienna, Zurich, Munich, and Paris, and in central Europe generally, he is not considered a particularly avant-garde director, though he was twenty years ago. Today, he is a very strong and important figure in the mainstream of the opera world. In this country, the critics often treat him like a revolutionary.

You talk about critics. Is the difference not also in the audience?

No. Audiences will respond to strongly committed work. It is fascinating to be at a performance, to listen to and observe the audience—always a very accurate judge. A very quiet public during performance and a very noisy and solid response afterwards usually indicates a success. The audience has *responded*. When the audience does not react, no matter what the critics say, that is not a good performance. The interaction between performer and audience is what art is all about, not the interaction between critic and performer.

If an audience in this country sees only one kind of production, will it not find avant-garde European productions strange?

After a Chéreau, Kupfer, or Berghaus production, there may be controversy, even booing, and fist-fights, but when a Peter Sellars emerges in this country, with his very positive concepts and ideas, it is refreshing and invigorating. The future of opera must be a mixture of the kind of work that you see from a Sellars, a Chéreau, a Bondy, a Peter Stein, or a Harry Kupfer, and also a conservative element that should and will continue. Why should it not continue? There are certain operatic artists who would be foolish to work with the new-wave directors. I don't think we want to see Pavarotti,

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Sutherland, Caballe, or Horne, working in that way. That doesn't diminish their great value as operatic artists, though.

There are some in this country who believe that there is no validity in the modern approach, that it shouldn't exist. There are others who find no validity in the "stand up and sing" approach of certain of the great singers. Why not consider both? When deciding how to create a production around a specific group of artists, an approach must be sought that suits those artists. It makes no sense to select an approach that does not suit them.

But the point you made before is that the critics are very powerful. Is that so?

Yes, especially in the major metropolitan centers. When you're dealing with New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, London, or Paris, critics are very influential. New York is considered to be the center of American cultural life in many of the arts—theater, dance, classical music, and opera. There is only one important daily music critic in New York. Although New York has three daily newspapers, two of which are tabloids that lack national circulation, it is only *The New York Times* review that is read all over the United States. If *The New York Times* music critic does not like a production or a singer, that production or singer is considered to have been a failure. A terribly adverse reaction to a production, singer, or conductor is damaging for their whole future in this country. One critic can make or break a career.

The strongest stand *The New York Times'* chief music critic has taken—and takes—is a constant harping on what he considers misguided theatrical approaches to opera. Anyone in New York who dares to put on a theatrically adventurous opera production is bucking the immediate negativity of *The New York Times.* (Maybe that's a good thing; maybe someone ought to go ahead, do it, and take a chance.) Consider the following: In *The New York Times,* on September 21, 1986, Will Crutchfield wrote, "Certainly the attempt to give old operas new life through avant garde dramatic reinterpretation has been one of the most profoundly unsatisfying movements on the current artistic scene."

Donal Henahan, *The New York Times'* chief critic, writing on September 28, 1986 in an article entitled, "Mr. Wilson, Say Hello to

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Richard Wagner," discusses the work of the American avant-garde director, Robert Wilson. Henahan concludes the article with the comment: "We want and need inspired interpretation from recreative artists, but within the boundaries of meaning the creative artist himself might recognize. I hope Mr. Wilson, when he comes to deal with the enigma that is *Parsifal,* will try to do more than present a meaning-free series of striking stage pictures."

Henahan, who has seen Wilson's work, perhaps in the operas of Philip Glass, obviously doesn't want him to direct standard grand opera. He is warning him that if he does, *The New York Times* will slap his wrist. This doesn't give the modern creative artist a chance to create, to use his imagination. There may be controversy about Mr. Wilson's production of *Parsifal* when it is seen, but Wilson is a major twentieth-century theater artist; he should be given the chance to make his statement before the reviews appear.

Crutchfield, in his article, talks about the singer's need to develop, to express himself. There are some singers and other operatic artists who will express themselves in the nineteenth-century mode, very much according to the vocal and dramatic rules of that period, but there are also some who will feel the need to express themselves in a new, unique, and personal way; this may involve breaking certain standardized rules. A critic in a position as totally powerful as *The New York Times* has to be careful not to end up by asking our art form to look backwards. Crutchfield ends his essay with a quotation from Verdi, recommending that we find a way of writing for the operatic stage that is new, yet compatible with the retention of the old. Verdi's maxim, quoted by Crutchfield, "Let us return to the past, it would be progress," will not appeal to all. Our new composers *may* choose to be more revolutionary than that! The past *may* be progress, but art cannot go backward. Art is obliged to go forward. There are times, as in the case of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* in Paris—produced by Diaghilev—when the audience and the critics may erupt in a storm of controversy and anger. That was a major step forward in twentieth-century art. The same thing happened with Schoenberg's theories and practices in music. We must be prepared for art to be revolutionary when artists feel the need to advance their means of expression. We cannot have a journalistic and critical stance that undermines the potential for major artistic development. It's stultifying for the art form.

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But your chief concern, certainly, is with the daily reviewing of opera in *The New York Times.*

Yes. Peter Hall's production of *Carmen* was lambasted in *The New York Times;* that was it! There were other very positive criticisms of that production; even though it was not a totally unsuccessful event, *The New York Times* said it was. Andrew Porter in *The New Yorker* was far more positive, but he is not a daily critic and he is read by a smaller number of readers nationwide.

What should happen to opera in this country, and to opera on a worldwide basis, is that we ought to see a broad spectrum of work, including new works done in a highly theatrical style, that speak of our time. In other words, we don't need to have new works written that sound like Puccini, Verdi, Mozart, or Wagner. The same ought to be true of staging. It doesn't necessarily have to be a literalist, pictorial, romantic, realistic style. However, when you're producing works that *live* in a romantic, realistic way, you must be wary of rendering them in a totally modern style, because that may well destroy the work. Each opera company has its own theories about opera production, but most tend to exclude any but their *own* way of doing things.

Given the situation in New York, what you're really saying is that the critic makes or breaks the opera.

Yes, and has a strong effect on the managements and artistic direction of the theaters. The two opera companies in New York are now very similar in production style; the City Opera on a less-massive scale. They both do a romantic, realistic style of opera production.

John Rockwell, the associate music critic of *The New York Times,* believes deeply in an avant-garde theatrical approach to opera, and writes about it often. However, he is the *second* critic, and is not assigned to review the major new productions of opera. He is assigned generally to avant-garde productions, and to regional and international projects, and when he sees a Robert Wilson, Patrice Chéreau, or Peter Stein production, he seems to respond positively.

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Is the David Hockney phenomenon a harbinger of the future in the sense that more and more artists will become involved in opera?

They always have been. Kokoschka used to do set designs; Chagall did them; so did Picasso. There's a long history of such involvement. I believe that major cinematic artists also ought to be integrated into the lyric theater. We would benefit greatly from a Mike Nichols, a Martin Scorsese, a Woody Allen, a Robert Altman, or an Ingmar Bergman being recruited for the opera world.

What are your feelings about the role of television representations of opera?

The impact of television and film on the potential operatic audience is enormous; television is allowing opera to be seen by millions, and is bringing people into the opera houses in great numbers. The Metropolitan Opera's radio broadcasts introduced opera to millions. If one could establish a weekly time slot on television for opera, not necessarily from the Metropolitan, this would be important. Imagine seeing twenty or twenty-five operas in a year on television. Some might be live, others recorded. There are a large number of tapes available now, and some of them are very good. It would give people at home, in small cities and towns, a chance to become acquainted with opera.

A major controversy currently is whether we ought to have surtitles in the opera houses. Some in the world of opera get very nervous about this, believing that they will be a distraction, distorting the operatic performance. When watching a screen above the stage, it is impossible to watch the physical and almost athletic expression of the opera singer at the same time. When Pavarotti or Sutherland perform, one *watches* them, fascinated by *how* they sing. When members of the audience are looking above the proscenium to read, the relationship between audience and performer is broken. However, those who do not know opera, who go to see a performance of *The Marriage of Figaro* with surtitles, may come out of the theater having laughed, been moved, and having understood the action in ways that would have otherwise been impossible. Though audiences should probably prepare themselves for opera by reading libretti or a synopsis, surtitles are an enormously helpful element in the enjoy-

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ment of opera. How did the surtitles come into existence? Movies! TV! Opera on TV is seen with subtitles. If you can put subtitles on the screen, why not in the theater? It *does* make a difference. This old art form has been greatly influenced by new technologies. That's how to build new audiences!

In the building of audiences, does each house try to build its own, without much regard for what others are doing?

Each house wants to build its own audience, but, via televised opera, the building of a national and international opera audience is also being accomplished. There are many more in this country who have seen live opera today than was the situation in the past. There are a greater number of performances every season. There was a time when the Metropolitan season started in mid-October; it now starts in mid-September. Since 1955 an incredible number of opera companies have been launched; there is a vast national audience for opera.

Have the types of people involved in producing opera changed?

We're seeing a changing of the guard; a new generation, a postwar generation, is now reaching maturity. A group who were once the "outs" are coming "in." The "ins" are reacting in many ways. In England, Peter Hall, Trevor Nunn, and Jonathan Miller—all brilliant young men, the rebels of the fifties and early sixties—are now the bosses; and how they react to being in control is quite revealing. How do you act when you go from being a rebel to being the power figure with the ability to change things? Do you in fact change them, or do you become conservative and not allow major change?

What else merits attention, particularly here in the United States?

John Crosby's Santa Fe Opera has had enormous importance: world premieres, new operas, commissions, working with Stravinsky, Hindemith, Henze, and the like. This has been an important company that has discovered an enormous number of singers, and has given chances to many excellent conductors and stage directors. Santa Fe is of national importance. Los Angeles has a new company, formed this

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year, led by Peter Hemmings, an Englishman, who also inaugurated the Scottish Opera.

In opera today, it is production that has become the burning issue. People may differ about musicianship and expression, but when someone emerges with a great voice, everyone recognizes it. Conservative or radical, all respond to superb singing.

Can we talk about composing opera today?

That is where you come to the question of music theater. The idea of singing to express emotions is no longer a modern idea. The only way to write opera is to forget the word "opera," and perhaps start by talking about music theater. Frank Zappa should write a piece of music theater. That would be interesting. Philip Glass's works are enjoying a very enthusiastic public. More conservative in musical style is Dominick Argento's work; some of it is very beautiful. Also, Conrad Sousa and John Adams are major American composing talents.

If you talk about American operas of the past decades, *Porgy and Bess* stands out. Virgil Thompson's two major pieces, *Four Saints in Three Acts* and *The Mother of Us All,* are remarkable; so, also, are some works by Barber, though they are, perhaps, not quite so strong.

We have to allow works to develop in quite different ways. It seems a pity that Steven Sondheim has not actually written an opera. I think that *Sweeney Todd,* and Bernstein's *Candide,* like *West Side Story,* belong as part of a serious American repertory, but they're not really operas, not in any conventional sense.

Why are we not seeing more contemporary opera?

Everyone feels they must have either the premiere of a new work or do one of the eight or ten masterworks of so-called contemporary opera. When *Lulu* and *Wozzeck* are spoken of as contemporary opera, it is quite funny, particularly when you consider their vintage. Especially in the regional theaters, there is a real unwillingness to do contemporary work (written within the last ten years) if it has already played elsewhere. If managements don't have a premiere, they fear that the publicity value of the work is reduced. When you look at Italian opera in the days of Puccini, when *Butterfly, Tosca,* and

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Bohème were offered, they were given in a large number of theaters within a year; the whole country was able to see them. That is one of the great problems in our country today. If there were a way to create a series of performances for any new opera, so that it was staged in at least three or four different theaters over a year, the composer would be able to revise the work, based on the practical experience of seeing it performed. The works, in my view, would sustain themselves a lot better. But this is not happening.

Dominick Argento wrote perhaps his best opera, *The Voyage of Edgar Allan Poe,* in 1976, but it has never been reproduced in the United States. It was staged in Minnesota, repeated on tour in Baltimore, and shown again in Oslo, Norway only this year. It was a huge success there, but has not been seen again in the USA. Argento has gone on to write other works, including *Casanova;* however, few of his operas are being performed with great regularity. *Miss Havisham's Fire,* also by Argento, was given at the City Opera. With some reworking and rethinking, it could have been an enormous success. It's never been redone except in a reduced thirty-minute monologue version. The piece deserves to be completely reworked; it has bold and radiant music.

We are not allowed to make a mistake in this country. If Puccini's *Butterfly* had been premiered here, it would never have been seen again, and the same for Rossini's *Barber of Seville,* Verdi's *Traviata,* and Bizet's *Carmen.* All were flops at their first performances, famous flops. They would never have been revived.

When you ask why new operas are not emerging, it is because they are not given a second chance. Also, patrons do not care to see their money used for reproduction; they wish to see it used for original production. If the Citicorp or an oil company like Exxon is going to back a venture, they want it to be a glamorous premiere. They don't generally support a third performance in Omaha. They have no interest in that. Leonard Bernstein's *A Quiet Place,* done in Houston and in Washington, has not been seen elsewhere in the United States. It has been seen in Vienna, in Milan, but it hasn't been seen in New York, Chicago, or San Francisco. This is Bernstein, America's most famous living classical musician. Operas are meant to be played to different audiences; then, after a period, it becomes clear whether or not they are worthwhile and will survive.

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I think that the process of developing a new opera is a very serious business; the patronage of a new opera involves not only commissioning it, but reproducing it. The real future of opera calls for second and third productions of operas that have been recently written. There are patrons; there is no question about that. These are individuals who have given generously for years, who still have money to give. There is also new money, from self-made men and women who enjoy the opera. The real difficulty is convincing them of the validity of contributing to this kind of project, whose ultimate cultural significance is greater than any involving the support of a new production of *Bohème, Rigoletto,* or *Traviata.* It is all a matter of education, convincing those who can do something financially that there are great opportunities. Major corporations must also be involved. They correspond to the great European families who gave money to opera in the days before federal and state subsidy. Corporations of today have to be importuned to help create art; not to recreate it, but to create and then to sustain it.

I think a large effort must be made to sustain works of our own time to a point where they can live, survive. It was the Met's production of *Peter Grimes* that brought that opera back to life. It had always been done at Covent Garden, but it was not shown internationally until the Met produced it in the 1960s. The same is true of some of the Janáček revivals abroad; England is really responsible for the revival of interest in Janáček's music.

To keep the art form vital, new works are essential. We have, today, great American singers, fabulous singing actors. One is told constantly that though they are adept in the various languages and styles—the Verdi style, the Wagner style, the Strauss style—they are not as stylish as certain German, French, or Italian singers. If we could build our own repertoire, and allow artists to sing in their own tongue, with their own expression, they would be doing what no one else can do.

I have had people who come to see me who have written operas, but cannot get them produced. Most encouraging is news that there will be a new piece by John Adams, with direction by Peter Sellars: *Nixon in China,* to be done over a year in Houston, Brooklyn, Brussels, and Amsterdam. We are finally exporting American opera, as Bernstein was recently exported to La Scala and Vienna. Seeing *Porgy and Bess* at Glyndebourne was also a thrilling experience!

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Something is beginning to happen in the eighties, which also involves Philip Glass and his works, now very prominent in the most avant-garde European theaters.

In an *Opera News* article in 1976 entitled, "Americans in America," I argued that American singers had always found a way to go to Europe, but that it would be nice if there might also be a route for them to develop in their own country. Today, there is; they have the choice. Some singers—a great number—are able to make their careers here. Some still go abroad; for various reasons, discussed earlier, they are obliged to go. All the important American opera companies—the Metropolitan, San Francisco, Chicago, Santa Fe—make a great effort to look at the native talent pool first. The phenomenon of the American singer exists. The phenomenon of the American conductor also exists: we now have Leonard Slatkin, John Mauceri, Michael Tilson Thomas, James Levine, James Conlon, Dennis Russell-Davies, and John Nelson achieving the international prominence once reserved for Europeans. A few American stage directors are beginning to gain prominence. This is where we start to weaken. American stage directors, and especially American composers, are still too few in number, and their development must be encouraged. Because of the Bicentennial, many American composers with major works have been heard, and now more American operas are being sought. That is why questions about Sondheim, Sousa, Argento, and Glass, about music theater versus opera, about how our national operatic style will emerge in the next decade, become the central ones. These are real issues; given America's role in opera today, they have international significance as well.

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Kitty Carlisle Hart

***Daedalus:* What is the situation of opera in New York today?**

Kitty Carlisle Hart: There are forty-two opera companies in New York State alone, and if you really want to get first-class training you can go right to Binghamton, to the Tri-Cities Opera Company, to Syracuse, Chautauqua, or Glimmerglas. Now I see here [looking at a newsletter]—I didn't count them, but there are twenty-one opera companies on one page alone. And there are pages and pages of listings. So what I told you on the phone is true, that when I was a girl you had to go to Europe to get your training; you had to, like Rise Stevens, who was ahead of me with Madame Schoen René, go to Prague or to some other great European opera city. Everybody went to Europe, and you had to have a great deal of backing, because it cost a fair amount—not so much as now—but young girls had to have patrons. Generally, the whole town chipped in to send a young girl or a young man, who had a beautiful voice, to Europe. My singing teacher, Miss Piper, was sent abroad by a group of people in St. Louis to study voice in Italy.

There is today an enormous interest in opera, which provides support for these small opera companies all over the country. The ones I have mentioned are the leading opera centers, and they have extraordinary training programs. They put on full-scale performances, with an orchestra—a large orchestra. We have a project at the Arts Council that I think is going to be replicated around the country, because we are a sort of bellwether of most arts agencies. We have put some money into what we call "pocket orchestras," which allow small opera and ballet companies to have live music instead of canned music. This is very important for singers, as it is for ballet dancers. At Binghamton, for instance, the opera plays in the old Loew's State moviehouse; a lot of old moviehouses play opera. Take for example Shea's Buffalo, which I'm always teased about, because they say that I opened it—I did not open it; Shea's opened in 1927,

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but I did play there. Once in a while, they play opera there now. This is happening all over the country today. For instance, in Cleveland they're starting to rejuvenate three huge moviehouses, which they're going to try to turn into a kind of mini-Lincoln Center. One would be for opera; another for theater; the last for ballet.

Daedalus: **Why has Binghamton, for example, been so successful?**

Kitty Carlisle Hart: Two people! Always and always people who are dedicated to opera. Any artistic venture—if it's successful—is the heart and mind of one or two individuals. A whole committee is liable to try to make a horse, and wind up with a camel. These two people have been working together through the years. They are both coach and musical director, and it is they who have made this achievement what it is.

What about other companies?

There are many small companies in and around New York that do chamber opera and concert. Again, these are excellent training grounds. They don't offer much acting experience, but they provide important training for the voice.

It is the scope and variety of opera today that excites me. The fact is that opera has an audience all over the country. When "Live from Lincoln Center" first started, I remember going to Rochester and they were very upset, because they stage one opera a year, and they were going to do *La Bohème* with the Rochester Symphony—it was going to be a lovely performance. They had heard, just before I arrived, that "Live from Lincoln Center" was going to do *La Bohème* for its first broadcast. They were desperate; they believed that it would decimate their audiences; no one would come. The reverse was true. They could have done five performances instead of two. People wanted to see *La Bohème* live, having seen it on television. I think television has helped opera a great deal, and that it is partly responsible for the renaissance of opera.

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What, briefly, are some of opera's major problems?

There are not enough people writing for opera; that is sad. The singers are not in exactly what you'd call the "golden era," particularly tenors. There really is an international shortage of singers who can fill a *large* opera house. There were always singers with smaller voices that were lovely. There were tenors with smaller voices; they sang a different repertoire, of course; we have always had them. But the "Helden tenor," the Melchiors, where are they? And where are the great big tenors like Pavarotti and Domingo? There are just two. I don't know any others.

Younger singers have smaller voices today. They're not small, but they're small*er*. I think the problem is that they don't study long enough. They don't wait until they're older, before they start singing; they begin too young. So, their voices don't have an opportunity to develop normally. In the old days, people did start later; they took seven full years to study. They started later, and they weren't able to jump from Brazil to Frankfurt overnight, and sing in both places. They had to take a boat or a train. They *had* to give their voices a chance to rest. We have a whole different way of looking at life now, and it's not good for the voice. Now you can say what you like, but it's not good for the voice to change from singing opera to singing musical comedy. There are certain physical restrictions. For instance, you cannot talk and sing all evening, and be an opera singer. The kind of opera singer that I was used to—with those glorious, golden, big luscious voices—are gone. And I miss them.

The jet airplane is destroying voices; so in a way, is the perpetual hurry, the desire for youth. In this great concern with making opera credible, if the libretto calls for a young lover, he or she *must* be young. The audiences that I was used to would put up with anything in the way of looks for the sake of the voice. They don't seem to want to do that anymore.

Do you travel internationally a good deal to hear music?

Because of my responsibilities here, as chairman of the Arts Council, I can't go abroad very often. It's a very large responsibility; a great deal of the taxpayers' money is involved. The budget is now up to about forty-eight million *in toto,* and that's a substantial sum. I've

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gone to Salzburg several years in a row, which is fun and interesting, but opera is only one of my responsibilities in the arts, and I know the situation best in this country.

Is contemporary theater helping opera very much? Is opera learning from theater?

Well, I remember Mr. Bing was always trying to get theater directors to come in and direct opera at the Metropolitan. Alfred Lunt directed, I think, *Così* one year, and Garson Kanin directed me when I made my debut at the Metropolitan Opera. Mr. Bing really wanted theater directors to come to direct opera. I remember when I was young I sang *The Rape of Lucretia,* with Agnes DeMille directing, and Giorgio Tozzi playing Tarquinius. At one point, in the rape scene, she had Tarquinius kneeling on the stage, and me running across, being caught over his shoulder, and then thrown on a very hard wooden bed—while we were singing high notes!

What about new productions of traditional operas?

Well, I thought the last [Metropolitan Opera House] production of *Tosca* was really staggering. It was so wonderful. It almost made up for the fact that, as *The New York Times* said, when Madame Caballe was supposed to jump off the parapet at the Castel Sant'Angelo she merely walked off the stage, looking rather like Queen Victoria going for her morning stroll. I liked it because the production and the voices were marvelous. That is a very good combination. If you add a good conductor, you're almost home free!

What in our day and age makes for good production?

Of course, it has to be architecturally good; the lighting must be innovative. Did you see the Zefferelli production of *Tosca?* It was a real eye-opener, because he used the stage so well. You know, most of these modern stages can do everything except cook breakfast! Well, the prison scene came up from the depths, and the angel on top of the Castel is generally some miserable little creature. This time you saw it from the perspective of people standing near it, on top of the parapet. And the whole thing had a different look to it; you saw the

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opera in a new way. The *mise en scène* in that particular production was very important.

Do you foresee a time when the video recording of opera will be common, when we shall see many more productions, coming from many parts of the world?

I think so, and I think that it will be very important. I saw some productions of the *Ring* on television last season from Germany. I didn't much like it, but it was new, interesting, and it was on television. I'm sure one could have gotten it on video cassette. It's going to cost a lot of money, but I think that it will happen. I hope so. And, you see, that will again demand those young bodies, those romantic faces. You would not be able to put on television, on the equivalent of Saturday at the Met, a Caballe singing *Tosca.* She would be laughed off the screen. So, television has changed the demand for the kinds of singers that are wanted. There's got to be some kind of verisimilitude in terms of the look of the person, and that was not necessary before.

Is the teaching within conservatories, by individual voice teachers, improving?

Good voice teachers were always in short supply. And they remain so! It's a very interesting subject to explore. A singing teacher is only good if he or she can reach the mind of the singer, because the voice is the only instrument that you can neither touch, tune, nor fix. You sing with your head. You make the tone in your mind; so a singing teacher must be able to reach the mind of the pupil. He can't put his fingers inside and say, "This is the way to do it!" as a pianist would put a child's fingers on the keys.

There's another good development in opera today. A wonderful thing has happened: most young singers in this country go to conservatories, because, very wisely, they say, "If we don't make it in opera, we can always teach. But in order to teach, we need a degree, and a certain in-depth knowledge of music." You would never find, today, a singer like Ezio Pinza, who, I am told, could barely read music. You have exceptionally well-trained young singers now. Most of them go to some kind of conservatory; they know their music.

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What else are you encouraged by?

In the age of the "Diamond Horseshoe," opera was really an interest of the rich, except in Europe, of course. In this country, it was a preserve of the wealthy, but now the interest is much more universal, and I love that. That's why opera companies have proliferated—*everybody* is interested in opera. I think that the proliferation of opera houses, of singers, and of conductors, and the fact that young people are even better musicians than they were, is all very heartening. If singers would only take a little more time—between engagements—and a little more time before they embark on their careers. They can stay thin and beautiful until they're forty! They should take a little more time before they start their careers. You cannot rush nature. If you try to, you simply short-circuit your aims. It takes nine months to make a baby, and it takes seven to nine years to make a first-class voice. There's no way around it.

There are side issues, of course, like television, which requires a verisimilitude in looks that doesn't always go with a beautiful voice. The Lord doesn't give everything to everybody. Very seldom does he give us a Tebaldi, who had everything, including a great voice, or a Lily Pons. The Lord gives a little of everything, so sometimes you have to compromise in opera if you want the great voice.

How do you feel about surtitles?

I *love* the surtitles! I am very anti-elite when it comes to surtitles. I go to see Beverly's opera, and I will tell you that while I consider myself tri-lingual, I now fully understand what the singers are saying. I feel that I know exactly what is going on. I hear jokes that I never knew were there until I looked at the surtitles.

As for people who already know the opera, they will get hooked on the story, and on the lyrics, and come back repeatedly. I'm sorry the Met won't use surtitles. They say that it's because the opening of the stage is too high, too big, for surtitles to be put in. But I don't think that's the real reason. I think they see it as *infra dig*!

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What do you feel about the lack of new composers?

I have thought about that a great deal. There are times in history when, quite suddenly, creative individuals, in good numbers, appear in different countries, in various of the arts. The mid-nineteenth century was very big for opera in Italy. The turn of the century saw operettas in Austria that have long since disappeared. The theater in America, in the only form that we really invented—the American musical theater flourished from the thirties to the sixties. It doesn't exist anymore. We are back to doing revivals. So, where the next opera explosion will happen, I don't know.

What you're really saying is there's a sufficient repertoire today, whatever its limitations, to sustain an interested public.

Absolutely. And aside from the large, full productions, there are small opera companies who stage operas that are not quite so well-known. We have them at Carnegie Hall, in concert form. They are done in many of the small theaters around New York, also in concert form. The early operas are produced very frequently now. I've heard quite a few in recent years.

One of the things that has caused opera to proliferate in our state *is* the Arts Council, because we have been forced to look outside New York City. When Governor Rockefeller mandated that 50 percent of our grants had to go to major institutions, the legislature, in its wisdom, realizing that most of the arts money would then go to New York City, mandated that fifty-five cents of each dollar had to go, per capita, per county. Well, there are some counties in New York State where there are more cows than people! New York is actually a very rural state. So, we were forced to develop arts organizations in places where there were none; or to strengthen certain ones that already existed. With an infusion of money from the Arts Council, small and struggling opera companies have been immensely helped.

What do they apply for?

They can apply for anything, but most of the money goes to the individual artist. We really don't support schools, but all these opera companies have training programs that we do support. It is all done

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through a system of peer review. Every application is first reviewed by the staff, who judge its artistic excellence and fiscal responsibility. Then, it goes to a peer review; then to a subcommittee of the Council, which I appoint; and then to the full Council of twenty members appointed by the governor, none of whom is salaried. I deal mostly with the governor and the legislature. It means a lot of trips to Albany. I'm not allowed to lobby, but I can exhort, educate—and hopefully—charm!

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Harvey Lichtenstein

In thinking about opera, it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the size of the house. I was, as you know, for a few years, the American director of the Spoleto Festival. There, in Spoleto, you have a theater with about 900 seats; it is the major opera theater. The pit and the stage are large enough to handle grand opera, but the house seats only 900. Compare that with the New York State Theater, or the Metropolitan, or even this house, the Brooklyn Academy.

What I am concerned about, in terms of opera, is that it enter the twentieth century. The arts that have been vital and exciting, those that show creativity and development, have been rooted in twentieth-century experience. Dance is certainly one such art. Perhaps because of the lack of a notation system until fairly recently, the repetition of the past has been difficult in dance. So, it is almost obliged to be inventive. You have new productions of *Giselle* and *La Sylphide,* and other of the classics, but they are few when compared to the standard repertory in theater, symphony, and opera.

So, what you have in dance is some late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century work, but mostly it is composed over the last few decades. Of course you have had a genius like Balanchine in dance; he has had a tremendous influence on the art. And, in modern dance, there has been the work of Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham, Paul Taylor, and others. Painting, again, is not an art in which you repeat the performances of the past. There has been a tremendous creative surge in painting and sculpture—particularly in this country—since the end of the Second World War. And central was the explosion of abstract expressionism, which has influenced dance.

In music and opera you have had basically conservative, retrograde societies. There has been no great drive in this country to produce opera in contemporary terms. Music has been, to a large extent, academic; musicians have mostly been talking to themselves since the end of the war. The American music theater that is of interest to me

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is that of Virgil Thomson, Aaron Copeland, and Leonard Bernstein. And now I would add Philip Glass.

James Levine made a statement, published in *The New York Times* the other day, about *Butterfly*. He suggested that it didn't matter that the new production was being done on the old set; it's all the same. I disagree. You are dealing with music, obviously, but you are also dealing with theater. I go to the Met and watch a performance of *Don Carlos;* after ten minutes, everybody's eyes are glazed over. But *Don Carlos* is a wonderful opera—a political opera—that could have enormous importance today. Yet it is not being realized. If you are going to recreate a work of the past, the creative process requires a contemporary sensibility. I'm not suggesting the need to be gimmicky or chic. Look at what Peter Brook did with *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* or with *Carmen;* he is seeking to make the work live today. Putting *Così fan Tutte* in a diner as Peter Sellars does is, in itself, neither good nor bad. It is a valid approach, if what comes out is something that enhances the work, and gives it meaning for today's audience.

Leaders in opera—particularly in the United States—are dealing with a very conservative public. But we should not go to the opera just to listen to the music. One quarrel I have with opera production today is that I don't think much real thought is given to the work itself. It is done basically the way it has always been done. Most directors are traffic managers, who get singers on and off, and move them around the stage. They may give them something to do, "Pick this up, put that down," and "Move over there," but there is little thought given to what the opera is about, and what meaning it has for us today. *The Marriage of Figaro* was a revolutionary play when Beaumarchais wrote it; it was not a trifle. How can one give the opera some kind of edge? Very few people think about that, particularly on this side of the Atlantic. The situation in Europe is somewhat better. The opera houses there are not so much at the mercy of the box office, nor at the mercy of a conservative public. I suppose that if nobody came, they would be in trouble, but, for the most part, they are more independent in their choices. Of course, they are state-supported, subsidized. Also there is more of an intellectual understanding of opera and theater in Europe. For this reason, major works of Bob Wilson, Philip Glass, and Meredith Monk are mostly produced in Europe. It was the Schaubühner that did a major

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Meredith Monk work; it was the Nederlands Opera that commissioned *Satyagraha* by Philip Glass. And since Wilson left the Brooklyn Academy of Music in the early seventies, most of his major works—practically all of them—have been first produced in Europe. There is an intellectual and emotional comprehension of contemporary, avant-garde work there, and more of an audience for it.

Opera is very expensive to produce. That is why I think what has happened with *X* is so interesting. That opera went through three years of workshopping and development. When it finally made its debut last night, I was tremendously impressed, having seen it develop for three years. Anthony Davis has written a coherent opera, an absorbing opera. Certainly the audience last night was enthralled by it. And, I believe, we will be seeing another auspicious opera debut next year with John Adams's *Nixon in China*. He plans to read some of it at the Guggenheim next month; he hopes to do another reading in the spring.

Jimmy Levine is a wonderful conductor. I wonder about his interest in the dramatic and visual aspects of opera. Those who deal with opera in the United States are mostly conservative; they often go for stars, repeating the same limited repertoire over and over. When they attempt a new opera, they often make bad judgments. Why? Because they lack a broad understanding of what is going on in the arts. One needs to have a sense of what is going on in the other arts—painting, poetry, dance. Dance has had an enormous expansion in its audience over the last thirty years—there has been Balanchine and the whole modern dance movement, the dance touring programs of the National Endowment for the Arts, and the regional ballet companies springing up all over, plus the incredible amount of activity and variety taking place in alternative spaces. Those who control the opera houses should experience some of this, to have a vision of what opera can be. They should see de Kooning and Pollock, Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, and Lichtenstein—and also the young painters of today: Schnabel, Clemente, Terry Winters, Jennifer Bartlett, David Salle, Susan Rothenberg. Many opera impresarios live in the nineteenth century. Their outlook is narrow.

Take, for instance, the Royal Shakespeare Company; I had many dealings with it in the early and mid-seventies. Before it was the Royal Shakespeare Company it was the Stratford Memorial Theatre until 1960 or so when Peter Hall took over. Hall felt very strongly that to

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do vital and interesting Shakespeare one had to have a tie also into the contemporary world of theater. So the company leased the Aldwich Theatre in London and began to do Pinter. Contemporary work and contemporary sensibility informed the company's approach to Shakespeare. This kind of exciting mix should be true in opera, as well.

John Crosby tries to do that in Santa Fe. He has always scheduled one or two new works each season, in a festival situation. For the most part, however, opera houses lack a commitment to what is contemporary, to contemporary sensibility. They have no understanding of Bob Wilson. While it would be difficult to work with Wilson in a repertory opera company because of the way he works, I still note a real lack of sympathy and understanding of what he has done. There isn't the broadness of vision, the reaching to understand what the currents in contemporary art are.

I believe that Philip Glass is writing the most important theater music today. He is also attracting a large audience. This is wonderful, for it gives me and others an opportunity to produce his work, knowing that we can realize some return at the box office. This is work that I would want to produce in any case. Part of Glass's success—and I think this is true probably in other genres as well—derives from a coming together of the popular arts and the classical or serious arts. This happens throughout history; it is happening today. There may not be great innovation going on, but new kinds of coalitions are emerging. And so, you will have crossover work by people like David Byrne, Philip Glass, Robert Wilson, Laurie Anderson, and Twyla Tharp. The same thing is happening in painting with Salle and Clemente, Haring, Schnabel, and Longo. There is a real *rapprochement* with popular culture. Rock music is invading serious music, and the opposite is also happening. The opera establishment has isolated itself, for the most part, from these developments.

I think this is a mistake; a mistake for the vitality of opera. Civilizations have always been revitalized by barbarians, swooping down, bringing new kinds of energy, gradually absorbing or being absorbed by the old culture, but infusing it with the energy of the new. I think that most opera houses and symphony orchestras are barricading themselves from contemporary culture. What I love about the work of Philip Glass and Steve Reich is that it is open. They are open to jazz and rock, and influences from Africa and Asia. They

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don't sit in an ivory tower at Columbia, Yale, or wherever, and write their compositions. They compose and go out and perform their works with their group, and have direct contact with a live audience. I think that has been invaluable for them. It was also a way of getting their works performed. Philip Glass said that he was not interested in teaching. He was a taxi driver, a plumber, but refused to get caught up in the academic scene. He wanted to be in touch with the audience, to develop a following for his work.

The Next Wave audience at the Brooklyn Academy of Music is different from audiences in other New York cultural centers, and different also from our audience during the rest of the year. Eighty percent of the audience for the Next Wave is under forty. Twenty-three percent is under twenty-five. Compare that with the houses at Lincoln Center. It's really extraordinary. It is also very different from what happens when we do more traditional dance and music programming. The Next Wave Festival lasts for two-and-a-half to three months, from the beginning of October to mid- or late December. This is our fourth festival. We've built an audience. It's a very mixed crowd, basically a young crowd, with a lot of painters and individuals who are not part of the Lincoln Center or Carnegie Hall crowd. The SoHo audience is our audience.

They respond to Glass and Reich. You have to understand that Philip Glass and Steve Reich were brought up in the galleries; their first concerts were sponsored by Leo Castelli, Paula Cooper, and Mary Boone; it was not the performing arts people who discovered them. They hang around with painters! Wilson is a visual artist; he has a gallery where he sells a lot of his work. When you talk to Wilson about his idols, two are Balanchine and Cunningham. We have an audience that is open to things; they come to see Pina Bausch perform on a stage full of water, with a hippopotamus, and they have a great time.

Interestingly enough, Pina Bausch, who is very wild and idiosyncratic, expressionistic, nonlinear, has attracted a large theater audience. I keep meeting people in the commercial theater who tell me how much they love her work. They recognize some extraordinary theatrical quality in her.

Ours is a youthful audience, an audience that you see on West Broadway on a Saturday afternoon going to the galleries, in the cafes at night, at the discos. It is an audience that is excited by Peter

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Gordon's music, by David Byrne's music, and by Philip Glass's music. This year, we're having the Kronos Quartet from the West Coast, which specializes in commissioning and performing contemporary chamber music. And they have some work by Terry Riley, which is astonishing.

The thing that was wonderful about the *Ring* in Seattle was that, even though it was not entirely successful, it had been intelligently thought about. There were miscalculations, of course. The immolation scene couldn't have been more dreadful. The idea simply didn't work. Still, there were wonderful ideas in the production, and the singing and the orchestra were very good. Wotan as a Victorian manager-director, a Wagner figure, was very interesting. They carried it through, and it had real dimension. It was an intelligent and absorbing production. I count it as seventeen successful hours in the theater, because the approach was thoughtful, interesting, imaginative, and visually exciting.

There is a problem with opera in repertory; changing an opera every night limits your capabilities tremendously. You have only to look at Glyndebourne to realize what is possible. The productions have sufficient rehearsal and "tech" time. They have a stage director working closely with a musical director, with a major orchestra in residence. Casts, for the most part, remain the same.

I remember spending a summer at Black Mountain College in 1952 or 1953. Who was there? Merce Cunningham, John Cage, Franz Kline, M.C. Richards, Jack Tworkov, Charles Olson, Bob Rauschenberg, David Tudor. Francine du Plessix was there as a student. There they all were. Though I didn't know what was going on, it was like a lightning bolt! I wonder whether those running the opera houses today need that kind of exposure—to a new world of art.

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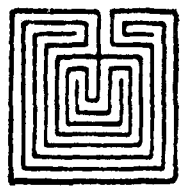
OPERA AT THE BASTILLE

● Olivier Chevrillon ● Maryvonne de Saint Pulgent ●



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The building of a new opera house is always an important event in the life of a city. Even when, as in the case of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, the construction plan is modest, keeping the external façade of the existing nineteenth-century house while restoring a seventeenth-century Inigo Jones square and making a new theater entrance where an outdoor market had existed for decades, questions are raised about the proposed exterior and interior renovations.

All such questioning is mild, however, when compared with the excitement presently agitating Paris, where a proposed new opera house at the Bastille is expected to cost almost ten times the amount allocated for the restoration of the house at Covent Garden. Important as the economic issues are in Paris, they are almost secondary to a large number of others—ideological, political, social, and aesthetic—that revolve around the idea of a "popular opera" being founded at the site of the Bastille, its opening to coincide with the bicentenary celebrations of the French Revolution. It is to give Daedalus *readers some sense of the character of the debate now occurring in Paris, to suggest why such an issue can become crucially important in contemporary cultural life, that two brief commentaries are provided.*

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Olivier Chevrillon

The Bastille Opera Project

The following excerpts are freely translated from a report prepared by Olivier Chevrillon in response to a request from the French Minister of Culture, François Léotard, to determine the reasonableness of the proposal to build a new Paris opera house at the Bastille, its opening to coincide with the bicentennial celebrations of the French Revolution.

THE BASTILLE OPERA has one great ambition: to raise Paris to the highest rung among centers of operatic art. The Palais Garnier [the present opera house] is seen as an obsolete, irreformable, and expensive structure. To its physical defects—the small size of the theater, the lack of clearance for storing sets, the absence of a rehearsal hall—one must add various social maladies: perpetual labor disputes produced by the perversities of too rigid corporatist policy, but also by poor working conditions; employment contracts that preclude a more economically sound management of the opera; an over-protected opera personnel that is said to be unmotivated. Refusing to treat these various failings one by one, the proponents of the new opera house declare that opera in Paris will be jeopardized if it is allowed to remain in the old house. The faults from which it suffers do, indeed, have serious negative consequences.

Offering too few productions in too small a hall (1,991 seats, of which 300 are "blind"), the Paris Opera can satisfy only a tiny minority of its potential audience at a time when the taste for music, especially opera, is growing rapidly; the situation produces more frustrated customers than satisfied spectators. Indeed, the inconveniences of the house undermine every aspiration for quality. They

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prevent the complex and delicate ensemble—formed by the orchestra, chorus, and singers, together with the technicians who support them—to reach the levels of excellence that the Paris Opera ought to be striving for. Furthermore, the stage at the Palais Garnier cannot be adapted to contemporary works. If there are not enough new works, we are told, it is because there is no suitable place for them to be presented. In addition, the government's subsidy (around 700 to 800 francs per seat) is now being concentrated on a handful of privileged individuals, instead of being widely distributed over large audiences; part of the subsidy is wasted through poor productivity.

The Bastille project claims to solve all these problems at once. With the necessary space and more modern equipment, the new building will operate under cost-effective and efficient conditions. A larger hall (2,700 seats), and more numerous shows (250 per year in the large hall, 120 in the modular hall), offered alternately, will make three times as many seats available each year, finally satisfying the public's demand for opera. The adjustable shape of the modular hall (400 to 1,300 seats) will give an advantage to new works. Released from stifling cohabitation, the ballet will once again dance freely on the Garnier stage. The change in site will, most importantly, inspire a mental metamorphosis; attitudes will change. Opera personnel will be freshly recruited on a more reasonable basis, and will work better within a modern framework. With improved productivity, and increased income derived from a larger public—despite the lowered prices—taxpayers will no longer see their money squandered. The project's proponents are prepared to acknowledge, however, that the combined subsidies for the two establishments, Bastille (opera) and Garnier (ballet) will exceed by a third the present state subsidy.

The project's weaknesses are attributable to gaps in the studies that either preceded or followed the decision to create a new opera. Lacking particularly are sufficiently precise analyses of the importance of potential publics for opera and ballet in Paris; also, on the conditions for the recruitment and employment of Bastille Opera personnel; finally, on the production costs of such intensified operatic and choreographic activity. The documents we have examined are premised on three quite uncertain wagers: a wager on the importance of the potential audience at the Bastille; a wager on the labor agreements that will come to be made; a wager on the ability to master the combined costs of Bastille-Garnier.

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The Commercial Wager

With the system at its most efficient, that is to say after the year 1991, the number of actual admissions to operas at the Bastille (in both the large hall and the modular hall) will be 2.7 times greater than the current total at the Palais Garnier and at the Salle Favart. It would increase the admissions from 240,000 to 657,000. Several considerations justify this expectation:

- The taste for music, and especially for opera, is constantly growing. This well-known phenomenon is attested by many indices relating to musical activity—increased sale of records and tapes, the success of certain opera films, and the like.

- The Paris Opera is turning away spectators; the demand for seats would be even greater if customers were not put off by the obstacle course they are now required to run.

- In proportion to population, opera audiences are now more important in London, New York, Berlin, and Munich than they are in Paris. Some say that the public even in certain of France's provincial cities appears to be larger.

- Bastille Opera tickets will average half the price of those of the existing opera. Moreover, the proposed opera house will carry out an active policy of consumer marketing and promotion, thereby reaching a new public—younger and less "initiated" than the present one. Here, there is a heavy reliance on subscriber research, but also on the allure of an opera center, with films, exhibits, a library, and other attractions, which will produce a kind of "Beaubourg effect."

These arguments have their value. Regrettably, they are too general to be wholly convincing. While it is obvious that there is an unsatisfied demand, what precisely is its size? 200,000 spectators? 500,000? On this major point, the facts collected offer no totally persuasive answer. The statistics regarding refused admissions are at best inconclusive. The number of seats turned down at the box office is unknown. But, for the 1985–86 season, it is known that: a) of 33,000 seats requested by mail, 15,000 were refused; b) of 93,752 seats sought through subscriptions, 26,418 were refused. Subscriptions represent about 30 percent of the total number of seats.

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Supposing that the rate of admissions refused at the box office equals those turned away by mail—itself a generous assessment—the total deficit for the year would be somewhat less than 90,000 seats. Also, it is possible that the difficulty of obtaining seats itself stimulates the demand, and that the mystique of the Palais Garnier is perhaps very attractive to customers. Let us, however, ignore such arguments. Taking into account, instead, the high cost of seats at Garnier (in relation to ticket prices envisioned for the Bastille) and the discouragement of those turned away, let us double the figure 90,000: the potential audience would then be 420,000, in comparison with the 657,000 admissions to which the Bastille Opera aspires. Their audience goal would only be 64 percent fulfilled; the average seat occupancy rate would fall to 55 percent. This disappointing possibility cannot be wholly discounted. Furthermore, the number of opera spectators, outside the Paris Opera, has grown markedly in the last years. Without taking into account the Bercy productions (which belong to a different genre), and the opera season of the Orchestre de l'Ile de France, this additional demand has resulted in 87,000 admissions for opera, and 450,000 seats for operatic works, including operettas, mostly at the Théâtre Musicale de Paris and at the Théâtre des Champs Elysées. Now, the latter, as is well known, wishes to reinforce its position in the operatic domain. The scarcity of places, consequently, is not nearly as severe as some may believe; the future market for opera in Paris does not depend on the Paris Opera alone.

Briefly, the commercial wager for the Bastille Opera house seems to us to be uncertain. By its very fragility, it throws a certain shadow on the entire project.

The Labor Wager

Absolved of every obligation to the current personnel of the Palais Garnier, the proposed opera house will recruit those associates it needs more freely, from new sources. "We must have the courage to question all the employment contracts," M. Gérard Mortier, the future head of the Bastille Opera, explains, "If not, it is not worth it, and let us not construct the Bastille."

The documents relating to the daily running of the Bastille Opera take such change for granted. Worktimes have become more flexible;

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the sixth week of vacation has disappeared; the system of weekly time off is modified. Yet, the creation of the new opera house, by itself, does not guarantee such an outcome. It would, as everyone knows, be the successor to the Paris Opera in its operatic activities. Consequently, no judicial solution allows it to avoid, *with any certainty,* the obligation (resulting from article L.122–12 of the work code) to rehire the Paris Opera personnel. In sum, the Bastille Opera risks finding itself in a situation similar to that of the current Paris Opera. This parallel is accentuated by the fact that the Bastille Opera could not in any case do without the orchestra or the choruses of the Paris Opera. Making a settlement will be difficult, and the ins and outs of negotiations could cause a prolonged interruption of operatic activity.

The Financial Wager

The estimated accounts submitted to us show a deficit of 271.3 million francs for the Bastille Opera: 140.5 million for the ballets at the Palais Garnier; from 8–18 million for the Salle Favart and 15 million for the dance school; in all, 127.8 to 137.8 million francs more than the current subsidy of 307 million francs, pension funds not included. A critical examination of these documents leads us to correct these figures upwards, to estimate that the total subsidy necessary will finally reach 521.9 to 531.9 million francs. Using the median, the difference for the state between the present and the future costs may be expected to reach 220 million francs.

Within the current limits of the budget set by the Minister of Culture, particularly for music, the annual cost to the state of 527 million francs for these two establishments seems excessive. Even if the government's allocations for music were raised, there is reason to worry that the in-depth efforts—and, above all, the educational projects—would sooner or later fall victim to the operatic and choreographic extravagance of the capital. Such a result is all the more paradoxical when one considers how unanimous is the opinion that the expansion of such educational efforts in the revival of French music is absolutely decisive. Have the Prime Minister, the Minister of Culture, and the Minister of Consumer Affairs not given clear priority to educational projects? Even supposing that the state were prepared to spend 220 million more a year for music, it is obvious

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that the best use of these funds is not in the Bastille-Garnier project, as presently conceived.

THE OPTIONS

If the current program is indeed too expensive to be maintained, three other possibilities need to be examined: simply abandoning any idea of a public project at the Bastille; adopting corrective measures that leave the essential project intact; or a number of other choices that entail a much more profound revision. We have studied three possibilities, each of which has its merits: amalgamating opera and ballet at the Bastille; keeping them both at the Palais Garnier; finally, a variant of this last option—setting up a "Domaine de la Musique," which would include the Conservatoire de Paris, at the Bastille.

Simply Abandoning the Project

The amounts that would be lost approach 776 million francs; the savings in investment, in relation to the total sum of 2,590 million, represent (including the resale of land) 1,814 million francs. We have discarded this option for three reasons: a) the waste that it entails—if it gains, hypothetically, the greatest saving, it also guarantees the maximum loss; b) the extreme absence of available space in central Paris for major collective establishments; and c) Paris has no major concert hall that bears comparison with those of London, Berlin, and New York. This lack will be greatly felt in the years to come.

Taking Corrective Measures

Among the important corrective measures, we have limited our study to two principal possibilities for reducing the costs: cancelling construction of the modular hall; cancelling the studios.

Cancelling the modular hall would save 240 million francs, and 58.26 million francs in annual running expenses. The modular hall, however, is perhaps the most interesting innovation of the project. Today, two principal functions are attributed to it: presentation of contemporary works (either created at the Bastille Opera or especially commissioned), but also of older works, notably baroque, that are ill-suited to the main hall. The second function is not yet clarified and excites certain objections. The main hall will not be able to offer,

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in quick succession, several "heavy" operas that require great numbers of orchestral musicians and large choruses. To provide reasonable programming, it will therefore be necessary to present operas from the eighteenth century.

It is obvious that the creation of contemporary works is hampered, indeed travestied, by the absence of a hall adapted to the variety of its productions and orchestral arrangements. A host of questions are raised by this point. Will there truly be a twentieth-century opera? Do enough contemporary works exist that are worthy of being played? Will they have a public? An *a priori* negative reply to these questions would be too pessimistic. While we ought not to expect a high occupancy rate for most contemporary operas, and while they are clearly expensive because of the number of rehearsals they require, many modern works have found a public. The director of the Opéra de Lyon, Louis Erlo, has been able to present two such works every year for ten years without losing his regular audience. One would wish therefore to give every possible encouragement to today's and tomorrow's composers, in the hope of generating interest in contemporary opera.

Still, the commission believes that the creation of contemporary operas—however interesting—fails to justify the very high costs of both equipping and using the proposed modular hall. This hall deserves to be built for truly *polyvalent* use—creative and educational—under the triple sponsorship of the Paris Opera, the Conservatoire de Paris, and the Ensemble Intercontemporain. That is why we recommend maintaining the modular hall in one of the options put forward in this report: the installation of "la Cité de la Musique" at the Bastille.

Cancelling construction of the studios would save 150 million francs in investment. Two questions, however, must be distinguished: a) is it wise to localize the studios at the Bastille, and b) does the new opera need to keep the arrangement of having studios under state supervision, or should it, from the beginning, prepare to subcontract for scenery, costumes, and props?

The choice of one of the most expensive sites in France for craft enterprises seems questionable to us. The commission recommends discontinuing plans for having studios at the Bastille because it believes that state supervision is an expense survival from the

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"arsenal economy" [i.e., an economy totally dependent on the state, making no use of subcontracting]. If the Opéra de Paris is transferred, it would be important to use the occasion to break with these archaic practices. The commission therefore proposes cancelling the planned studios at the Bastille, and resorting instead to subcontracting. This solution suggests, all the same, retaining at the Bastille Opera a reduced but adequate team to maintain, repair, and adapt both costumes and scenery.

The envisaged corrective measures are important. Alone, however, they are not likely to resolve the central problem of *running costs*. More radical solutions must therefore be considered.

Amalgamating the Opera and the Ballet

With this option, the Bastille Opera will be completed according to the current program, but without the studios and the modular hall. The Paris Opera will then move, in one piece, into the Bastille to save costs. That done, the best, or least bad, use for the Palais Garnier is to convert it into a concert hall. To avoid the worst solution—that of keeping the training and rehearsals of the Corps de Ballet at the Palais Garnier—it would be well to transfer this activity to the Bastille, into premises built on part of the site of the studios. The commission has not been able to calculate the exact cost of this investment (land and construction), but it will reach at least 100 million francs. The delay necessary to plan and then bring this new arrangement into being can be estimated as one year.

On these grounds, the calculation for the Bastille Opera house only amounts to a deficit of 295.3 million—less than that otherwise projected. The most tangible progress results, obviously, from the increased annual supply of opera seats (+150,000) and ballet seats (+48,000), all at reduced prices.

Converting the opera house into a concert hall—We have acknowledged that the capital lacks a large supplementary concert hall; why not give this role to the Palais Garnier, since it will be losing its primary vocation? The commission has dismissed all possibility of making a grant to a private theatrical enterprise. Indeed, it does not see how this arrangement could be reconciled with the respect owed both the monument and the tradition it embodies. The state could

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continue to manage the hall, which would be rented for recitals and symphony concerts, and would become the home of the Paris Orchestra when the agreement that links it to Pleyel expires. The state would then bear the burden of the probable deficit of the establishment, estimated at 9.4 million francs. This solution meets a serious obstacle, however. Is it desirable for the Paris Orchestra to leave a large hall (Pleyel) for a smaller one (Garnier)? Will it choose to do that? If the response is negative, the predicted deficit will have to be raised. The plan to convert the Palais Garnier into a concert hall will have lost a great deal of its meaning.

The option of amalgamating opera and ballet at the Bastille renders the Favart hall useless to opera. We suppose that it would then serve as a "théâtre d'accueil" [a theater that commissions works, rather than having its own company to produce and perform there], run by the state, as specified in the first study, (at a cost of from 8 to 18 million francs). The costs for running the dance school (15 million francs) would also remain constant.

This option saves, in investment, the combined value of the modular hall, the studios, and the corresponding land, but it entails constructing the necessary premises for ballet, costing 2,300 million francs. In terms of running costs, it makes the state responsible for a sum of approximately 328 million francs a year.

Maintaining the Current Location of the Paris Opera

Under this arrangement, the opera and the ballet will remain at the Palais Garnier, which will be wholly modernized. An opera and concert hall will be built at the Bastille, very different from the planned opera house. The Bastille will become the home of the Paris Orchestra and will commission operatic and choreographic entertainment from other companies—particularly those works that the Paris Opera wishes to present there. The modular hall disappears. The grounds made available by this decision are put back on the market. The goal is clearly three-fold: a) to preserve the natural vocation of the Palais Garnier; b) to respond more creatively to the demand for opera and ballet; and c) to create a large concert hall, which the capital will probably need in the next five to ten years.

Refitting the Palais Garnier—This is certainly necessary, in order to ease the physical constraints that preclude its efficient use, that

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excessively restrict the number of its presentations. Although modernization has, curiously enough, not been the subject of any comprehensive study, the Palais Garnier is thought to be impossible to reform. The research carried out at the commission's request by M. Roubert, architect of the opera house, together with M. Warnier, shows that this reputation is undeserved. While it is true that the capacity of the hall is hardly elastic, a very careful rearrangement would allow fifty-two good seats to be created. The principal defect of the building—the lack of clearance for storing scenery—can be remedied to a large extent by freeing a broad space on either side at the back of the stage.

Rolf Liebermann has suggested constructing a hall inside the Berthier studios, with the same dimensions as the stage at the Paris Opera. Rehearsals could be organized there, using scenery constructed in these studios.

We have not chosen this tempting solution. On the other hand—for five million francs—restructuring the rehearsal hall, already being used by the ballet and the orchestra at boulevard Berthier, would allow operatic works (without scenery) to be rehearsed there, and would help free the stage at the Palais Garnier. Better use calls also for completely reconstructing the stage equipment, which is in a deplorable state.

The transformations envisaged by M. Roubert would entail some modification of the rear profile of the Palais Garnier. But the monument's stern is not its most beautiful part, and its aesthetics would not suffer greatly from this small operation. A delay of two years is to be predicted for all these changes. That is to say, they ought to be put off until the Bastille's concert hall is in a condition to receive, on a temporary basis, the Paris Opera shows.

Constructing an opera and concert hall at the Bastille—A large part of the stage-well planned for the Bastille Opera would be retained, so as to gain a truly usable hall for operatic performance. From a technical point of view, this is certainly the best option. The commission did not have the time, however, to conduct a market survey of its probable use for concerts. However, the uses for a large auditorium seating 2,500 to 3,000 seem to be good. The Bastille concert hall could thus become the "home" of the Paris Orchestra. Would it be too large? That risk exists. Fitted out as a theater, the Bastille

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hall—without being a center of production—would receive shows from elsewhere, notably those from the Paris Opera. The commission has calculated at sixteen million francs the supplementary subsidy the establishment would require to produce forty additional performances there.

The modernization of the Palais Garnier would allow an estimated 200 shows rather than the 150 now given there each year. The supply of opera seats, in this option, could be increased by approximately 150,000. The additional performances staged at the Bastille alone would create 108,000 seats a year.

Creating a "Domaine de la Musique" at the Bastille

In a sense this last is a variant of the preceding option, since it provides for keeping the Paris Opera at the Palais Garnier, but constructing an opera and concert hall, as described above, at the Bastille. At the same time, its ambitions are very different. It makes the Bastille, in effect, the great musical center of the capital, encompassing not only the concert hall, but the modular hall, and the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris, which would move into the liberated space. The modular hall will be used by three institutions: the Ensemble Intercontemporain, which will give concerts there; the Paris Opera, which could use it to create contemporary operas; and the Conservatoire. In addition, the hall would host other musical institutions for concerts, as well as operatic and choreographic performances. This polyvalence justifies the investment, and the project appears perfectly reasonable.

The option nevertheless has serious drawbacks: it would delay by about eighteen months the installation of the Conservatoire in its new premises; it would also entail abandoning the Portzamparc project at La Villette, which has already received the support of future users. According to a most careful evaluation, the total investment would rise to 3,400 million francs (Bastille 2,120; Cité de la Musique 570; Garnier 710) against the anticipated 3,320; (Bastille 2,590; Villette 630). It must also be emphasized that, in addition to renovating the Palais Garnier, construction of the modular hall is included in this plan. The running expenses (not including those of the Conservatoire, which are supposed equal, whatever its location) reach 356

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million francs, almost fifty million more than the present subsidy of the Paris Opera.

A comparison of the costs and economic advantages does not provide a decisive argument for or against any one of the three options described. The choice between keeping the Paris Opera where it is now, and transferring it to the Bastille, depends above all on an intangible element: the meaning attributed to the Palais Garnier as an opera house.

Personally, I consider this meaning important for a society that seeks, in countless ways, to retain ties with its past, to avoid allowing its monuments to become mere vestiges. The example of several European countries is worth both mentioning and considering. The opera houses of Dresden, Munich, Vienna, and Milan, destroyed completely or in part during the last war, were identically reconstructed—some even replacing their paintings and silks—at prices that one can scarcely imagine. Why? Did these cities feel that the magic of opera was in some part linked to the sites of their great expansion and glory, and that, for an art whose apotheosis and principal works date chiefly from the nineteenth century, the stately instruments of that era were irreplaceable? There is undoubtedly a stronger link than one imagines between the container and its contents. Whatever it may be, abandoning the Palais Garnier would make Paris a unique case—a surprise to foreign eyes. The Palais Garnier is considered one of the architectural and acoustic masterpieces of the world. It is perhaps the world's most beautiful opera house, and it can be renovated.

While it is certainly better to offer concerts there than to make a museum of it, shorn of its original function, the building would stand lifeless in the middle of Paris. The avenue, the Place de l'Opéra, would take on a commemorative character. This change in purpose would remove yet a little more life from neighborhoods that have already lost too much. It would destroy a myth, a symbol, meaningful both for Parisians and foreign visitors.

Without concealing the subjective nature of these remarks, I recommend to the Minister of Culture and Communication solutions that preserve the "vocation" of the Palais Garnier, while also creating a "Domaine de la Musique" at the Bastille.

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Maryvonne de Saint Pulgent

The Myths of the Bastille Opera

On March 9, 1982, François Mitterand announced plans to construct a new opera house at the Place de la Bastille, to be inaugurated on July 14, 1989, to coincide with the bicentennial celebrations of the French Revolution. Nine months after his accession to the presidency of the Republic, Mitterand was making a political decision; since the time of François I, state power has often asserted itself through the construction of monuments. It is not surprising that one of the first acts of the Chirac government, following the March 1986 election that brought him to office, was to entrust Olivier Chevrillon, who had previously been President-Director-General of the weekly magazine *Le Point,* with the task of reexamining the whole project. It had been much criticized by right-wing parties, and its principles had been questioned by a good part of the French musical community. The Bastille Opera idea, the product of a complex and contradictory mythology that has evolved over three centuries of French operatic history, carries myths also about "popular opera," "modernity," and a triumphant technology, all united under a single magical invocation—"change."

* * *

When the Bastille plans began to materialize, the French were feeling rather out of sorts with their opera. Indeed, the Paris Opera had long been the subject of a national debate, nourished by literary and worldly polemics, fed on pedantic quibblings, and soured by rivalries of personality and power. In the eighteenth century, the three great

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operatic "quarrels": that of the Ramists and the Lullists; that of the Bouffons (the most famous, which saw Rameau, Rousseau, and the encyclopaedists confront each other on the question of the supremacy of Italian opera over French opera); and that of the Gluckists and the Piccinists, forever pitted the rival parties of the French court against each other. From that time, there have always been some who have wanted to modernize the opera, change public taste, and fight against the ill-will of opera musicians, who were always thought to be difficult. In the following century, Berlioz made angry charges in his book *Les Soirées de l'Orchestre,* concerning the habitual manias and vices common to the functioning of the Royal Academy of Music. In the last third of the century, the mood was more peaceful, following the 1873 inauguration of the sumptuous Palais Garnier, whose construction had been decided on by Napoleon III in 1860. The young Third Republic endorsed without emotion what the fallen emperor had done. But this was only a short reprieve; the accusations soon began again: of a repertoire that some thought to be too conservative, that others complained of being too receptive to German opera (Germany was then the "hereditary enemy"); of too great burdens imposed on the public finances; of the elitist character of its audience, and of the repeated checks placed on every attempt to "democratize" the opera. After the Second World War, the Palais Garnier entered into a decline, as did many other French musical institutions.

In 1967, André Malraux, the first Minister of Cultural Affairs of the Fifth Republic, asked Jean Vilar, a man of the theater and creator of the Théâtre National Populaire de Chaillot, to provide ideas to revive French national opera. Vilar, joining forces with choreographer Maurice Béjart and composer Pierre Boulez, prepared his report. Boulez was very radical on the question. He had imparted his views not long before in the German weekly, *Der Spiegel,* in an article entitled "Sprengt die Opernhäuser in die Luft" (Blow up the opera houses). He repeated his opinion in 1972, this time in French, in the review *Preuves*: "I once said that the most elegant way to deal with the problem of opera would be to dynamite the opera houses, and I repeat that." Still, one of the recommendations of the Vilar-Boulez-Béjart report was to construct a new opera house in Paris, with 4,000 seats, abandoning the Palais Garnier to its sad fate. Because the report came to the government in June 1968, when students were

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demonstrating in the streets and Général de Gaulle's power was wavering, the problems of the Paris Opera seemed of only secondary importance.

Three years later, the nomination of Rolf Liebermann as head of the Palais Garnier resolved, as if miraculously, a crisis that some now claimed was simply caused by incompetent direction. Encouraged by the ambitious policies of this distinguished professional, who was already noted for having given new life to the Hamburg Opera, great international voices and celebrated directors, together with a large and enthusiastic public, all returned to the Palais Garnier. With all this new attention, the old opera house was suddenly found to be too small.

In 1977, a commando of higher civil servants, headed by an Inspector General of Finances, François Bloch-Lainé, busied themselves with the problem of the Paris Opera. Finding a dramatic waste of public funds, the group went on to recommend "the construction, in Paris, if possible in the very center of the city, of a large modern opera house capable of seating 3,000." The Palais Garnier was to be left to specialize in ballet performances. Since then, this proposition has been ritually raised every time a new report has been published on the issue—about every three years. All the governments in power have adopted the principle, and the new opera house has been planned successively for the "hole" in Les Halles near the Georges Pompidou Center, then at La Villette near the Museum of Science and Technology, and, finally, at the Place de la Bastille.

The endurance of the idea of a "new modern and people's opera" is demonstrated by the presence, from the 1960s to the 1980s, on the advisory council of the Bastille Opera of Pierre Boulez as vice-president and of François Bloch-Lainé as councillor. When the present Minister of Culture, François Léotard, announced in June 1986 his wish to reduce the size of the project, it was not surprising that Pierre Boulez reacted violently, crying out in *Le Monde* that the Minister's methods "are those of the Inquisition." A dream of twenty years, of erecting the new opera of the future—the Bayreuth of the twenty-first century—seemed to be collapsing.

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Like Bayreuth, the Bastille Opera rests on certain founding myths. First, it derives from a metaphysic of change, which depends on a physical move, but also from an ontogenetic faith in the metamorphosis of meaning, achieved through change in location, both finding expression in the proposition repeatedly hammered into the heads of the unbelievers by the faithful: opera at the Palais Garnier is an absolute evil; place it elsewhere, and all will be well again. The musicians will rediscover their enthusiasm, the singers their talent, the technicians their effectiveness, the producers their genius, the directors their competence, and the unions—their discretion!

Why such hostility to the beautiful Palais Garnier? The French language evokes with pleasure the idea of a "génie du lieu"—a spirit of place. In certain instances the spirit may be harmful; it conspires against the people, against democracy. So, in 1790, Parisians decided quite spontaneously that the palace at Versailles was in some way responsible for the terrible political conduct of their king, Louis XVI: they returned the whole royal family from that hateful place in full procession, without ever resolving the problem. There was never again to be a French government at Versailles, except for the bloody period of the Paris Commune. A reaction of the same sort compels the founders of the Bastille Opera to wish to transfer opera out of the Palais Garnier, a symbol, for them, with its gold, nymphs, and Foyer de la Danse, of all the defects of bourgeois opera, an opera clearly not intended for the people. If they were able to, they would get rid of the Palais Garnier entirely. They cannot; it is a historical monument, protected by law. So they abandon it to a sort of "forfeiture"; it will be used for ballets, concerts, or, more radically, transformed into a museum, in imitation of the palace at Versailles. The oddest suggestions have been put forward, almost promiscuously, which show a surprising contempt for everything that is not opera. Are the acoustics at the Palais Garnier suited to stage concerts? By what miracle will seats that are not acceptable for opera, because the view to the stage is limited, become suddenly acceptable for ballet? What is to be done with the vast spaces left empty by the removal of the opera administration? How can the hall cost less for a ballet or a concert than it does for an opera? To all such questions, there are few or no answers. The Devil will provide.

Still, those for whom the cultural future of the Palais Garnier matters little, shriek and swear that an insult has been done the

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national patrimony when the Chevrillon report, agreeing with the Palais Garnier architect, proposes to transform the building so as to make it suitable for opera. Hypocrites find it intolerable that, contrary to what has been argued everywhere by the proponents of the Bastille Opera—there was no architectural study on the subject before the one called for by Chevrillon—it is indeed possible to renovate the Palais Garnier completely at a cost three times less than that involved in the construction of a new opera house. "It is not at all the same thing," the Bastille Opera proponents protest; "what are you planning to do about popular opera, about modern opera, about technological opera?"

* * *

There is nothing less new than the idea of popular opera: it goes back at least to the time of the Revolution, and of the revolutionary *fêtes* of the period. There is also no idea that is more ambiguous. How is one to understand the adjective "popular"? Does it call for the masses invading the opera house, a place traditionally closed to them, reserved, in the words of the nineteenth century, for the "elite among the noble, the wealthy, and the beautiful"? One reads in the program for the architectural competition created in 1860 to construct the Palais Garnier that the capacity of the future hall was to be limited to 2,000 places, precisely to avoid any possibility of such invasion by the masses. The prohibition was to be lifted on only one occasion each year: the infamous Masked Opera Ball, where students, artists, and "ladies of the evening" crowded in, and with them, aristocrats, delighted to mingle with low company for this singular event. The masses made do with this one occasion to enter the opera houses. Contemporaries noted that the audiences for the *free* opera presentations at the Palais Garnier, given four times each year, differed very little from those which were paid for; missing only were the aristocracy and the high bourgeoisie, who were generally summering in their country houses at the time. Is it really the fault of the place, or is it the *genre* itself that does not seem to attract the great public?

If the idea of opening opera to the masses is at the base of the concept of popular opera, it must be recognized that such ambitions declined significantly in the last twenty years: the Vilar-Boulez-Béjart

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report envisioned an opera house of 4,000 seats; that of Bloch-Lainé recommended a house of 3,000; the Bastille Opera will, finally, have only 2,700 seats. This is a far cry from the capacity of the Verona arena, or, indeed, of Bercy, with its 13,000 seats, built by the city of Paris, which welcomes an operatic production each year. Fundamentally, the proponents of the Bastille Opera are not wholly favorable to the idea of making it an opera for the masses. Gérard Mortier, leader of the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels, and an adviser at the Bastille Opera for several months in 1985–1986, declared in the French weekly *L'Express* that "it is not a concern of contemporary opera to attract the crowds, but rather, to create an audience that is intelligent, even elitist."

Is it then a matter of mounting productions that will please the greatest number? Is this the significance of the adjective "popular"? Even less so. Gérard Mortier has said: "if we need a Pavarotti to fill the Opera-Bastille, if the attraction of theater and music is not enough, let us not construct it. . . . We must struggle continually against commercialism, against easy success." He cites the Glyndebourne festival (in Great Britain) as an example not to follow: "this festival deteriorates constantly, in its effort to please. . . . I doubt that *Carmen* ought to be shown there, unless they invite Peter Brook." The great "popular opera" must guard, then, both against presentation of operas that are most appreciated, but also of singers who are the most celebrated. In essence, it is not truly "popular" except for its location: in the French mind, the Bastille, or rather the square built on its original site, alone symbolizes democracy, the people. The fact that the construction of this giant vessel—two-and-a-half times the size of the Metropolitan Opera, before the reductions decided upon in June—would have called for the eviction of a good number of inhabitants, that the quartier would suddenly have become very "chic" in anticipation of future opera evenings, in no way obliterates the mythic value that attaches to the Bastille Opera's "popular" reputation.

* * *

The truth is that for French intellectuals, the adjective "popular" is most often understood as the opposite of "elitist." It is an accepted

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idea for reasons that are never explained, that in art the elite has "conservative" and even "retrograde" tastes. From that, irrefutable logic leads necessarily to the conclusion that the masses will love the modern; if that proves not to be the case, it is only because they are misled by pernicious propaganda, or that their access to modernity is insufficiently organized. For an opera to be popular, it must, by this definition, be modern in its aesthetic choices. *Carmen* and Pavarotti are not modern. Peter Brook is, and, according to Boulez, so too, in descending order, are Berg, Debussy, Moussorgsky, Wagner, and Mozart (the last two with the reservation that they be "newly read," "reinterpreted" by a "modern" director). The Vilar-Boulez-Béjart study adds Gluck, Berlioz, Schoenberg, and Berio to the list. The fact that a good part of the most universally admired repertoire is thereby set aside, including virtually all Italian operas—a musical "purge" in effect—is to be compensated for by a major creation of new works. These are to be performed in a technical environment so perfect as to overcome once and for all the notorious reticences of audiences (both elite and general) with regard to avant-garde music, reticences revealed every time the Paris Opera presents a contemporary work at the Palais Garnier or the Salle Favart, once or twice a year, even now.

* * *

In any discussion of popular opera or modern opera, we necessarily glide towards a discussion of technology in opera. It must be acknowledged that this is the most fascinating aspect of the subject. Still, it is amusing to note how much the discussion of today continues that of the nineteenth century. The ambition to do better than the rest of the world remains constant. "No other city will be able to rival Paris for its opera"; this must be "a theater without rival in Europe." Such were the sentiments expressed during the Second Empire, at the time of the building of the Palais Garnier. "The Bastille Opera may well become a striking expression of French genius in our time," the music critic of *Le Monde*, Jacques Lonchampt, writes. He wishes to see it as "a work that is in conception and preparation unique in the world." The prospectus for the Bastille Opera emphasizes, with no undue modesty, that the work ought to be "a prototype

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of the new generation of lyric theaters that are coming into the world today."

Just as the Palais Garnier, at its opening, boasted the largest stage in the world (it is still the highest), and the most sumptuous house, the Bastille Opera promises to have the most sophisticated machinery. It will be the only opera house to have five rear and side stages identical to the mainstage, with five clearances of the same size in the basement. This, quite apart from the assembly areas or the space where the sets will move, travelling about entirely on trolleys obedient to electronic command. These technical marvels, as fragile as they are sophisticated, according to some experts, remain in the plans as revised by François Léotard. The Minister has, however, cancelled construction of the other revolutionary feature of the Bastille Opera: the "modular hall" reserved for research, whose stage/seating configuration was to be entirely mobile, following the taste of composers and directors.

What could be more striking about the technology of this project than its inflated costs? In 1870, the stage of the Palais Garnier was the only one in the world to allow real horses to march and even canter past, as in Meyerbeer's *Prophet*. The Paris Opera, until the First World War, maintained an entire stable and team of grooms: it was important to make full use of the technical possibilities of the stage! On the Bastille stage, it will not be horses that will circulate, but fully-mounted sets. There is reason to worry that these sets may grow more heavy, more costly, and more numerous with each production. Lacking sufficient clearance space at the Palais Garnier, the set designers were compelled to make do with only one or two sets for each opera. At the Bastille, it will be possible to use four at a time; we can be certain that the designers will not resist the temptation to do so.

Nothing guarantees that the ultimate objectives of the Bastille Opera, which are intended to be less costly than the Palais Garnier, will in fact be attained. To take up again the frequently made comparison between the Bastille Opera and the supersonic Concorde jet airplane—with its bold technology and futuristic allure—one may well ask whether the Bastille Opera, like the Concorde, will not be too greedy for fuel, that its hours in flight will eventually have to be restricted. And, all this without the prejudice of the risk of crashing at the moment of take-off.

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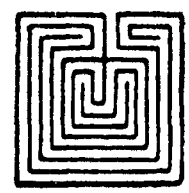
TEXTS AND MOTIFS

● Pierre Boulez ● Hector Berlioz ●



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In the winter of 1958, *when* Daedalus *began to be published regularly as a quarterly journal, a special section entitled "Texts and Motifs" was created. The rubric provided an opportunity for valued work, in print or out of print, published or unpublished, to be made more widely available. The hope was expressed that it might even serve to "convert those among us who have lapsed back into the comforting certainties of our own disciplines, to the larger uncertainties." The text chosen for that first* Daedalus *issue was Max Weber's "Science as a Vocation."*

Later that same year Daedalus *published selections from Alfred North Whitehead's lectures on "Symbolism, its Meaning and Effect," and still later from W.S. Jevons,* Principles of Science. *Continuing in that tradition, but extending it, the journal published at a later date passages from Mark Schorer's* William Blake, *selections from Georges Sorel's* Reflections on Violence, *from Thomas Mann's* Doctor Faustus, *and from a speech that Mann delivered in Vienna on the occasion of Freud's eightieth birthday. Still later,* Daedalus *made available some unpublished correspondence of John Dewey.*

The "Texts and Motifs" section has not been much used in Daedalus *in recent years. The editors believe that it deserves to be revived. It is particularly appropriate that this be done in this issue with an essay by Pierre Boulez, from a new translation of certain of his major musicological writings recently published both in the United States and the United Kingdom. A very different sort of work—what might almost be described as a "cautionary tale"—written by Hector Berlioz, translated and edited by Jacques Barzun, is also printed. Each is illuminating for itself. Each serves admirably in complementing other of the materials published in this* Daedalus *volume.*

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Pierre Boulez

Berlioz and the Realm of the Imaginary

WHAT BERLIOZ BROUGHT TO MUSIC is so singular that it has not yet been truly absorbed, has not become an integral part of tradition. Whereas Wagner, for example, has given rise to fanatical admirers as well as detractors, Berlioz still seems to be isolated. He stands at a point where customary judgments cannot be easily applied. I think we must see the principal reason for this in the fact that a large part of his *oeuvre* has remained in the realm of the imaginary. No one dreams of denying that his works exist or of maintaining that they cannot be incorporated into our musical heritage, for he resembles Wagner in having fully as much practical sense as imagination. One of the permanent aspects of his character is just such a mixture of realism and fantasy—and his realism could be every bit as meticulous as his fantasy could be extravagant.

Berlioz's compositions exist in a sphere that is difficult to define, for they do not respect, and do not claim to respect, the usual conventions in the process of creation and transmission. Depending on circumstances, history required the composer to write works either called for by religious services or intended as entertainment. Such conditions require established forms, which change from one period to another but which respect the social conventions currently in force. Sacred music is one aspect of this ritual, whereas concert and operatic

"L'Imaginaire chez Berlioz," from *High Fidelity—Musical America*, 6 March 1969, Vol. xix. First published in French in *Points de repère* (Christian Bourgois, éditeur, 1981,1985). Reprinted in Pierre Boulez, *Orientations* (Faber and Faber Ltd. and Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 212–219.

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music is the other side of the same ritual. Obviously, there has always been so much stylistic osmosis between the two that it is sometimes difficult to tell which of the two rituals any given piece of music belongs to.

The French Revolution did not change this situation in any significant way, although it did emphasize the lay ritual as being a national duty. Music was to be one of the essential phenomena of the great popular celebrations organized by the French Revolution, under the obvious inspiration of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The revolutionary ceremonies rejuvenated Christian ritual and imposed different conditions upon it by making it deal once again, and urgently, with the needs of society. They used processions and "abstract" spectacles, which had been the Church's exclusive prerogative for centuries. Replacing God by the goddess Reason was all that was needed; circumstances changed, but the underlying motivation remained the same. Nevertheless, the relationship between music and society was fundamentally different; Berlioz was to remain under the influence of this change throughout his entire life.

It is true that we can see a directly observable revolutionary influence in such works as the Requiem, the Te Deum, or the *Symphonie funèbre et triomphale* (the revolutionary element presents no apparent contradiction with either Roman Catholic observances or governmental devotion), but this influence is not the most mysterious phenomenon found in Berlioz. He has often been criticized for his gigantism and his fondness for ostentatious effects. He frequently did his best to encourage misunderstandings by a certain redundancy in his works as well as in the written commentaries with which he accompanied them throughout his lifetime. Was this not simply to compensate for dreams he had never realized—dreams that, as I see it, were connected with certain aspects of the French revolutionary idea that had been deprived of their meaning by political and social evolution?

To this must be added a devouring need to talk about himself. It shows up not only in the books, which describe his own life as a man and as a musician, but also in numerous works in which, directly or indirectly, he tells about himself. This will be recognized as a need that is inherent in romanticism. What we have here, however, is a very special form of romanticism peculiar to Berlioz, for it is difficult to detect confessions as consistently personal in the other great

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composers of the period. Even if personal details come constantly to the surface with some of them, these other composers transpose and go beyond the personal in such a way as to create a myth. (I am thinking, obviously, of *Tristan.*)

Under such conditions, everything helped to make Berlioz a predestined victim of the imaginary. His compositions both transcend and fall short of the conventions; it is only with great difficulty that they can finally be inserted into the customary framework of the theater or the concert. They overrate the latter and underrate the former. The limitations inherent in a social form of transmission have scarcely any *raison d'être* or any logic; we are fully aware of their artificial character, which restricts the imaginary and does not allow it to find expression in an immaterial, fluid dimension. All the circumstances that make the concert and the theater what they are seem too restricting to this form of the imaginary; they suppress, to a large extent, its reason for existing.

There is an essay by Berlioz that the public knows hardly at all; titled "The Orchestra," it is the final chapter of his *Traité d'orchestration,* a study read only by professional musicians. It is by far one of his most significant texts because it reflects his attitude toward musical realization. It is typical of Berlioz's character, mixing realism and imagination without opposing one to the other, producing the double aspect of an undeniable inventive "madness"—a fairly unreal dream minutely accounted for. This chapter begins in a down-to-earth way and simply describes for us what an orchestra is, how it is organized, how it can be installed in a hall. There is nothing out of the ordinary in all that. Soon, however, there are added some revealing observations concerning outdoor orchestras. The open air, which is the typical place for imaginary expansion, is the acoustical enemy of organized sound. Between "nature" and "musical *art*" there already exists, therefore, this basic incompatibility. Nonetheless, Berlioz allows them a chance of joining forces in the streets of a city, with the façades of the buildings serving as the approximate equivalent of a closed hall. (His personal reasons for this stand are apparent; perhaps he would not have written so positively after his disappointments in the streets of Paris.) Once past this very symptomatic digression, Berlioz describes the ideal performing conditions for concerts and the theater. But he cannot stop there, and once again he gives in to the

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demon of supposition by describing what he calls a "magnificent Festival orchestra." He deplores "the constant uniformity of performing masses" as an insuperable obstacle; in short, he denounces the standardization of symphonic components and considers it in its negative aspects. His reflection, dating from more than a century ago, on the rigidity of the symphonic apparatus shows great insight; this rigidity was indeed going to fix and paralyze the imagination of composers in established, accepted dimensions, allowing them to express themselves only within the same framework and under identical circumstances. It cannot be denied that the standardization of musical conditions brought about, in a certain sense, greater professional competence, built up the repertory, made the concert a social tradition (even a social necessity); Berlioz could not, however, at that time and especially in France, be aware of this phenomenon. On the other hand, he saw very clearly the absolute necessity of a model—musical as well as sociological—to be adhered to by all works intended for symphonic performance.

I pass over certain polemical remarks—unfortunately still pertinent—on the tyranny of economic conditions and come to the heart of the chapter, namely the description of an imaginary orchestra, down to the minutest detail. "Yet it would be curious," writes Berlioz,

> to try once, in a composition written for the occasion, the simultaneous use of all the musical forces that can be gathered together in Paris. Let us suppose that a conductor had them at his command, in a vast hall designed for the purpose by an architect familiar with acoustics and music. He should, before writing, determine with precision the plan and arrangement of the immense orchestra and should keep them constantly in mind while composing.

Berlioz has already called our attention to "the importance of the *various points the sounds come from.*" Here also he condemns standardization in orchestral disposition since it works against the specific character of each work. His point of view, which surprises us by its acuteness, is essentially modern. Berlioz writes:

> Certain parts of an orchestra are intended by the composer to ask questions, and others to reply; now, this intention becomes evident and beautiful only if the groups between which the dialogue is set up are at a sufficient distance

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from each other. The composer must therefore indicate in his score the placement he considers appropriate for them.

And certainly we have as a precise example the way orchestras of brasses are placed in the Requiem; this involves not only a spectacular effect but the location of a musical structure in physical space. The position of the brasses in the Requiem was originally descriptive and symbolic, associated with the four points of the compass, but it nevertheless reveals, for the period, a far from customary preoccupation. (I do not believe that Venice, Gabrieli, and Monteverdi contributed anything at all to Berlioz's conception in this respect, for he was unfamiliar with the ceremonies of San Marco.)

Further on, Berlioz foresees and answers the objections that could be raised to the use of great orchestral masses and the way they were going to be abused at the end of the nineteenth century, when musical material not originally designed for such treatment was *fattened up* by doublings. To quote him again:

Until the present day, in festivals we have heard only the ordinary orchestra and chorus with their parts quadrupled or quintupled according to the number of performers; but here we would be concerned with something quite different, and the composer who wanted to bring out the prodigious, innumerable resources of such an instrument would most undeniably have to perform a new task.

Berlioz then describes in minute detail the entire make-up of this imaginary ensemble, giving us supporting figures; no fewer than 467 instrumentalists and 360 choral singers. The listing of instrumentalists begins with 120 violins and finishes with 4 Turkish crescents (also called Chinese pavilions); in between we find 30 harps and 30 pianos; as for horns, there are all of 16. Including the chorus, we don't quite reach the "symphony of a thousand" but we are not far from it, since the performers number 827. It is not the entire mass of this enormous ensemble that interests him; what he actually wants is to form a large number of small orchestras within this large orchestra, in order to diversify both style and sonority:

It would naturally be necessary to adopt an exceptionally broad style whenever the entire mass is called into play, saving delicate effects, light and rapid movements for small orchestras that the composer could easily form and set to dialoguing within this musical congregation. Besides the iridescent

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colors that this multitude of different timbres would allow to burst forth at any moment, unheard of *harmonic* effects could be created.

Berlioz then begins to draw up a precise catalogue of the effects that could be created with this orchestra; and I must say that reading this catalogue has always led me to make a most incongruous comparison with the end of *Cent vingt journées de Sodome,* where de Sade, temporarily unable to finish his book, draws up a catalogue of perversions still to be described. There is in de Sade's catalogue as in Berlioz's a sort of obsession with the analysis of different combinations which is ascribable to the same reason: nonsatisfaction of desire, compensated for by imagined debauchery. This is, no doubt, the only thing Berlioz and de Sade have in common!

Reading this catalogue imagined by Berlioz when all the instruments would be united in a "festival orchestra," let us pass in review all of nineteenth- and twentieth-century instrumentation, including not only the instrumental combinations that have already been used but also those that exist in a merely approximate way because of the economic impossibilities about which Berlioz complained (and which have not changed very much up to the present!). I would like to cite a few of those whose chances of being realized remain exclusively within the realm of the imaginary. They are, among others:

The combination *in a large orchestra* of 30 harps with the entire mass of strings playing *pizzicato,* thus forming, in their ensemble, another gigantic harp with 934 strings, for graceful, brilliant, voluptuous accents throughout the entire range of nuances;

The combination of the 30 pianos with the 6 glockenspiels, the 12 pairs of antique cymbals, the 6 triangles (which, like the cymbals, could be tuned in different keys), and the 4 Turkish crescents, making up a *metallic* percussion *orchestra,* for joyful and brilliant accents in the *mezzo-forte* nuance.

After describing in this way the entity made up by each possible grouping, he wonders "how to enumerate all the harmonic aspects that each of these different groups would assume when associated with the groups that are sympathetically or antipathetically related to it?" Here again Berlioz's combinative imagination is given free rein. He describes widely used, even conventional, forms, such as "a song by the sopranos, or the tenors, or the basses, or of all voices in octaves, accompanied by an *instrumental orchestra*"; but he also

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thinks of less orthodox solutions and reverses the usual situation in order to suggest to us "a song of violins, violas, and violoncellos *together,* or of woodwinds *together,* or of brasses *together,* accompanied by a *vocal orchestra.*"

Whether because of exhaustion or because of discouragement before such a mountain of future treasures, the description ends with a very prosaic "etc., etc., etc. . . ."

De Sade comes to mind again immediately afterwards, for Berlioz is going to give us a minute description of "the system of rehearsals to be set up for this colossal orchestra." The conductor and his assistants, sub-assistants, and rehearsal masters are governed by a single set of rules, which cover no fewer than twelve stages. And that is where the *realistic* description ends.

In passing, Berlioz emphasizes the excellent qualities of this orchestra and defends himself against an accusation to which he is particularly sensitive:

> The popular prejudice calls large orchestras *noisy;* if they are well organized, well rehearsed, and well directed, and if they perform true music, they should be called *powerful;* and certainly nothing is more different than the meaning of these two terms . . . What is more: unisons take on real value only when they are multiplied beyond a certain number . . . That is why small orchestras, regardless of the quality of the performers who make them up, have so little effect and consequently so little value.

Discussion on this subject, from Berlioz to Mahler, from Wagner to Schoenberg, has not yet died down. There is not much chance that it ever will. But it is only an episodic aspect over which Berlioz does not linger, and I shall quote his concluding paragraph, which is especially symptomatic:

> But in the thousands of combinations obtainable with the monumental orchestra we have just described would be found a harmonic richness, a truthfulness of timbres, a succession of contrasts that cannot be compared with anything that has been accomplished in art up to the present, and above all an incalculable melodic power, both expressive and rhythmic, a force of penetration unlike any other, a prodigious sensitivity to nuances in the ensemble and in its parts. Its repose would be as majestic as the ocean's sleep; its agitations would be reminiscent of a tropical storm, its explosions would evoke the cries of volcanoes, it would re-create the moaning, the murmuring, the mysterious noises of virgin forests, the clamoring, the

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prayers, the triumphal and mourning songs of a people with an expansive soul, an ardent heart, impetuous passions; its silence would impose fear by its solemnity; and the most rebellious organizations would shudder upon seeing the roaring growth of its *crescendo,* like an immense and sublime conflagration!

The majestic description winds up with this accumulation of conditionals, and the conditional is indeed the appropriate tense for this project that Berlioz was never to realize but that he carried in his memory. His "people with an expansive soul" reminds us of Rousseau, Robespierre, the ceremonies in the Champ de Mars. This project, which was to remain in Berlioz's imagination, came to a halt before the contingencies of a closed, withdrawn society. One is tempted to say that Berlioz's written compositions make up only the scattered pieces of a Great Opus that escaped him—an Opus that resembles in this respect that definitive *Livre* towards which Mallarmé was working, the *Coup de dés* being only a stage along the way.

The *Spectacle* that Berlioz constantly dreamed of is a spectacle of himself projected into the realm of the imaginary—an absolute future dimension sustained by an abolished, exceptional past. None of the works in which he consented to respect the limits of theatrical convention—even *Benvenuto Cellini,* the most "autobiographical"—ever succeeded in taking on a truly scenic appearance. A letter from Wagner to Liszt on this subject is particularly revealing; it already gives an acute definition of the problem:

> If there is a musician who makes use of the *poet,* it is surely Berlioz, and his misfortune is that he always adapts this poet to his musical fantasy and arranges first Shakespeare, then Goethe according to his wishes. He needs the poet because the latter fills him completely, transports him with enthusiasm, forces him, becomes for him just what a man is for a woman. It is with sadness that I see such an extraordinary artist go astray because of this self-centered solitude.

Béatrice et Bénédict and *Les Troyens* contain pages that are among Berlioz's best, but far from bringing about a theatrical rejuvenation, they prove to be incapable of providing the kind of dramaturgy and myth-making quality that would establish them as examples. Very weak scenic conventions often contradict the composer's musical imagination; we do not get beyond "separate pieces" and "recita-

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tives." Although these are admittedly amplified by comparison with the operas of Berlioz's predecessors—Gluck and Weber in particular—they unfortunately do not blend into a new entity that would find its sustenance in a specifically "Berliozian" conception of theatrical aesthetics. As for such compositions as *La Damnation de Faust,* staging them reduces their imaginary dimension to a painful sham. Berlioz's visual imagination is not essentially of the kind that can be represented *materially;* it is, indeed, a "vision." On the other hand, as soon as Berlioz forces himself to write for the theater, his "vision" is hindered, clouded over, by the permanent presence of theatrical conventions that he remembers and that he does not create. Instead of making his genius open out, they confine him within limits that cause him to lose his freshness and greatness, sometimes reducing him to picturesque effects. (Could one possibly attribute the same significance to the tempest encountered in the *Ring* and the storm in *Les Troyens*?)

The best of Berlioz's imagination is displayed in an area that, in the final analysis, belongs to no realm determined by precise conventions. In a sense, *Lélio* is the typical example of what the proper field of his poetic invention might have been if the contingencies of musical organization had not quickly led him to give up this kind of project, which, for various reasons, was so difficult to accept, because of aesthetic considerations quite as much as because of economic difficulties. In *Lélio,* there is a unique way of linking theater and concert by the autobiographical element. It is an intimate journal, sufficiently elaborated upon to be read and played collectively; the author has included himself in the staging, and in his own person. Such a procedure belongs neither to the theater nor to the concert, but rather to public confession.

This original way of expressing himself anticipates a future time if we look at it from a pragmatic point of view. The conditions imposed upon Berlioz by his period did not make it possible for him to achieve an exact realization of his ideas: that is why he had to put up with substitute solutions that fell far short of satisfying the requirements of his original intuition.

Fragments of a great imaginary project, Berlioz's compositions no doubt require us to find a style of presentation unconnected with any of those that we still accept today, since the latter exist for works

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conceived in terms of certain predetermined categories. This is an essential condition, I believe, if these works are to find their rightful place, if they are no longer to produce, as they often do now, the impression of an incomplete phenomenon, an erratic creation. After a 100-year delay, the discovery of this point of encounter and fusion between imaginary concert and imaginary theater remains naturally very problematic, especially since the values represented by Berlioz's works are frozen by history, whether or not one tries to deny this fact.

If posthumous reconstitution remains in all likelihood an illusion, one can with greater profit infer from this suspended dream present-day solutions for contemporary creation. But these solutions could scarcely be *seen*, literally speaking, as having anything to do with the original *vision* of Berlioz.

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How a Tenor Revolves around the Public

BEFORE DAWN

The as yet unknown tenor is in the hands of an able teacher, who is full of knowledge, patience, feeling, and taste, and who begins by making of him a perfect sight reader and a good harmonist, gives him a broad, pure method, initiates him into the beauties of masterpieces—in a word, trains him in the grand style of singing.

Hardly has the tenor caught a glimpse of the emotional power with which he is endowed before he aspires to the throne. In spite of his teacher he wants to make his debut and rule supreme. But his voice is not yet formed. A second-class theater opens its doors to him; he makes his debut and is hissed. Incensed by this outrage, the tenor obtains permission to break his contract and, his heart full of contempt for his fellow countrymen, hies himself to Italy.

At first he runs into mighty obstacles in the way of a new start, but he ends by overcoming them; he is pretty well received. His voice changes, it becomes full, strong, incisive, fitted to express the violent passions as well as the softest sentiments; its timbre gradually acquires purity, freshness, and a delightful simplicity. These qualities finally make up a talent whose effect is irresistible. He is a success. The Italian managers, who are good businessmen, sell, buy back, and resell the poor tenor, whose paltry salary remains the same even though he brings riches to two or three theaters a year. He is exploited and squeezed dry in a thousand ways, so much and so often that in the end his thoughts revert to his native land. He forgives her

"How a Tenor Revolves around the Public," from Hector Berlioz, *Evenings with the Orchestra*, trans. Jacques Barzun, pp. 64–74. Copyright 1956. Reprinted by permission of Alfred Knopf, Inc.

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and even goes so far as to admit that she was right to be severe at his debut. He knows that the director of the Paris Opéra has his eye on him. He accepts an offer and crosses the Alps again.

SUNRISE

The tenor makes a fresh debut, this time at the Opéra, and before a public predisposed in his favor by his Italian triumphs. Exclamations of pleasure and surprise greet his first melody: from then on, his success is assured. Yet this is but the prelude to the emotions he is to stir before the evening is over. The audience has admired the fusion of feeling and of discipline with an organ of enchanting sweetness; there remain to be heard the dramatic accents, the bursts of passion. A number comes during which the daring artist, stressing each syllable, gives out some high chest notes with a resonant fullness, an expression of heart-rending grief, and a beauty of tone that so far nothing had led one to expect. A petrified silence reigns in the house, people hold their breath, amazement and admiration are blended in a mood akin to fear. There is in fact reason for fear until that extraordinary phrase comes to an end; but when it has done so triumphantly, the wild enthusiasm of the listeners is beyond imagining.

We reach the third act. An orphan returns to his father's thatched cottage; his heart, seared by a hopeless love, and his senses, affected by the blood and slaughter he has just witnessed at the wars, collapse under the shock of the most appalling contrast conceivable: his father is dead; the cottage is empty; all is still and silent; it is peace, it is the grave. Both the bosom on which it would be so sweet to shed tears of filial piety and the heart beside which his own could alone beat with less pain are separated from him by the infinite—*she* will never be his. . . . The situation is poignant and worthily treated by the composer. Here the singer reaches a height no one would have thought him capable of. He is sublime. And from two thousand panting lungs break forth cheers such as an artist hears only twice or thrice in his lifetime, cheers that repay him sufficiently for his long and arduous labors.

It is all bouquets, laurel wreaths, recalls. Two days later the press, overflowing with enthusiasm, broadcasts the name of the radiant tenor to all parts of the world where civilization has penetrated.

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It is at this point that, if I were a moralist, I might toy with the idea of addressing a homily to the triumphant hero, somewhat in the style of Don Quixote's speech to Sancho when that worthy squire was about to take possession of the government of Barataria:

"You have reached the summit," I would say. "In a few weeks you will be famous; frantic applause will be yours and likewise endless engagements. Authors will pay court to you; managers will no longer keep you waiting in their anterooms, and if you ever write to them, they will answer you. Women whom you do not even know will speak of you as their protégé or very intimate friend. People will dedicate to you their books in prose or verse. Instead of the five francs you give your janitor at Christmas, you will have to give him a hundred. You will be exempted from service in the National Guard. You will get leave from the Opéra from time to time, so that the provincial towns can fight over your presence and performances. Flowers and sonnets will be heaped around your feet. You will sing at the *soirées* given by the Prefect, and the Mayor's wife will send you apricots. You are on the verge of Olympus at last; for as the Italians call their women singers *dive* (goddesses), it naturally follows that the great men singers are gods. Well, you have now been promoted to deity; try to remain a good fellow nonetheless—and don't look down on people who offer you good advice.

"Remember that the voice is a fragile instrument, which may be spoiled or broken in a minute, often without any discoverable cause; and that such an accident is enough to hurl the greatest of the gods from his high throne and reduce him to mortal rank, and sometimes even lower than that.

"Don't be too hard on the poor composers.

"When from the depths of your elegant carriage you see in the street Meyerbeer, Spontini, Halévy, or Auber going on foot, do not greet them with a slight nod of patronizing friendship. They would laugh at it in pity, and passers-by would look upon it with indignation as supreme impertinence on your part. Do not forget that a number of their works will be admired and full of vitality when the memory of your high C from the chest is sunk in oblivion.

"Should you visit Italy once more, do not become infatuated with some feeble spinner of cavatinas and, on your return, palm him off as a classic, telling us with an impartial air that Beethoven 'was also talented.' For no god can escape ridicule.

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"When you accept a new role, do not allow yourself to make any changes in it except by the author's leave. Bear in mind that a single note added, curtailed, or transposed may make a melody commonplace or distort its expression. You have in any case no right to do this at any time. To modify the music one sings, or the book one is translating, without saying a word about it to the man who wrote it only after much thought, is to commit a shocking breach of trust. People who borrow without giving notice are called thieves; unfaithful interpreters are libelers and assassins.

"If by any chance there should arise a rival whose voice has more bite and power than your own, do not, in the midst of a duet, start matching lungs with him. Take it for granted that you must not fight the iron pot, even and especially if you are a piece of Ming china.

"When on tour, beware also of saying to the provincials, by way of reference to the Paris Opéra and its chorus and its orchestra: '*My* theater, *my* chorus, *my* orchestra.' Provincials do not enjoy being taken for fools any more than Parisians do. They know full well that you belong to the theater, not the theater to you, and they would find your fatuous conceit the acme of the grotesque.

"And now, friend Sancho, receive my blessing; go and govern Barataria. It is a rather low-lying island, but the most fertile, perhaps, to be found on earth. Your people are but slightly civilized. Therefore encourage public education, so that in a couple of years' time they will no longer suspect of witchcraft those who can read. Do not take too seriously the flattery of those you invite to your table; don't keep repeating your damnable slogans; don't get upset when you have an important speech to deliver; and never break your word. May those who entrust their interests to you feel sure that you will not betray them; and in whatever you do, may you never be accused of being sharp (or flat) anywhere in the world."

THE TENOR AT HIS ZENITH

His salary is one hundred thousand francs, with a month's leave annually. After the first role that brought him dazzling success, the tenor attempts a few others with varied results. He then accepts some which he gives up after three or four performances if he does not excel in them as he did before. In so doing he may spoil the career of a composer, annihilate a masterpiece, ruin a publisher, and do

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enormous harm to the theater. Considerations of this kind are to him nonexistent. Art for him is nothing but gold coin and laurel wreaths, and the most likely means to obtain both quickly are the only ones he cares to use.

He has noticed that certain melodic formulas, certain vocalizations, certain ornaments, certain *fortissimi,* certain concluding platitudes or vulgar rhythms have the property of immediately drawing applause of a sort. This seems to him reason enough to rely on these devices; indeed, to insist on the composer's supplying them in his roles, regardless of expression, originality, or elevation of style; meanwhile showing hostility toward loftier and more individual productions. He knows the effect of the old methods he is in the habit of using. He is ignorant of the effect of the new methods submitted to his attention, and though an interpreter, he does not regard himself as one who can afford to remain disinterested. When in doubt, he abstains as far as he can.

The timidity of a few composers who have given in to his unreasonable demands has already made him dream of introducing into our theaters the musical practices of Italy. There is no use telling him that *Maestro* means "Master," and that the name has been rightly conferred on the composer; that it is *his* conception that must strike the audience free and unimpaired through the medium of the singer. It is the master who gives out light and casts shadows; it is he who is king and answerable for his acts; he proposes and disposes; his ministers must have no other object, seek no other glory, than that of rightly grasping his plans and, by putting themselves exactly at his point of view, ensuring their realization.

(Here the reader's entire audience shouts "Bravo!" and so far forgets itself as to applaud. The tenor on the stage, who just then was yelling out of tune more than usual, takes the applause for himself and throws a gratified glance at the orchestra.)

The reader continues:

The tenor will not heed. He wants to vociferate in drum-major style. Ten years on the stage south of the Alps have made him an addict to hackneyed themes with pauses during which he can hear himself applauded, or can mop his brow, fix his hair, cough, and swallow a lozenge. Or again he insists on senseless vocalises, interspersed with threatening, angry, or tender accents, and laced with low notes, shrill cries, buzzings of hummingbirds, screechings of

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guinea-fowl, runs, arpeggios, and trills. Whatever the meaning of the words, the character of the part or the situation, he feels free to accelerate or slacken the tempo, to add scales up and down and ornaments of every species, not to mention ah's and oh's that make the phrase absurd. He dwells on short syllables, gallops through long ones, disregards elisions, introduces aspirate *h's* where none exist, and takes breath in the middle of a word. He no longer has standards; anything goes—provided it helps the emission of one of his favorite notes. Who would notice one absurdity more or less in such good company? The orchestra either keeps its counsel or else humors him. The tenor lords it over everyone and tramples on everything. He struts about the theater with the air of a conqueror; his crest gaily glints above his proud head; he is king, hero, demigod, god.

Only, it is hard to make out whether he is weeping or laughing, whether he is in love or in anger. There is no melody left, no expression, no common sense, no drama, no music; there is simply an emission of vocal sounds, and this alone matters; this is the great thing. He goes to the theater to hunt down the public as others go to the forest to hunt the stag. Forward boldly! Let us give tongue! Tally-ho! Tally-ho! Let art be our quarry!

Soon the example of this vocal fortune makes the management of the theater impossible. It awakens and fosters mad hopes and ambitions among all the singing mediocrities. "The leading tenor gets one hundred thousand francs; why," asks the second tenor, "shouldn't I get eighty thousand?"—"And I fifty?" puts in the third.

To feed these gaping vanities, to fill up these chasms, the manager vainly cuts down the expenses of the company, reduces and cripples orchestra and chorus by giving the artists who make them up porters' wages. Vain are his efforts, useless his sacrifices—until the day when he tries to find out exactly how he stands, attempts to compare the hugeness of the tenor's salary with the work done, and discovers with a shock the following curious result:

The first tenor, with a salary of a hundred thousand francs, sings approximately seven times a month; he therefore takes part in eighty-four performances a year, and receives a little over eleven hundred francs an evening. Taking a role comprising eleven hundred notes or syllables, this represents one franc a syllable. Thus in *William Tell:*

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My *(1 fr.)* presence *(2 frs.)* may well seem to you an outrage *(8 frs.)*
Mathilda *(3 frs.)*, my indiscreet steps *(5 frs.)*
Have dared to find their way as far as this, your dwelling *(13 frs.)*.
Total, thirty-two francs: your words are golden, my lord.

Given a prima donna receiving a mere pittance of forty thousand francs, Mathilda's answer of course comes cheaper (commercial parlance), each of her syllables averaging a mere eight sous, but even that is not so bad:

It's easy to forgive *(2 frs., 8 sous)* the wrongs *(16 sous)* one has a part in *(2 frs.)*.
Arnold *(16 sous)*, I *(8 sous)* expected you *(32 sous)*.
Total, eight francs.

So the manager pays, goes on paying, pays again and again, till the day comes when he can pay no more and is compelled to close his theater. As his brother managers are in no more flourishing condition, some of the immortals have to resign themselves to teaching sol-fa (those who can) or singing to a guitar in the public squares, with four candle-ends and a green carpet.

THE SUN SETS—STORMY SKIES

The tenor is on his way out. His voice can neither go up nor come down. He has to decapitate every phrase and sing only what lies in his middle register. He wreaks havoc upon the old scores and clamps an unbearable monotony upon the new as a prerequisite to their being heard at all. His admirers are disconsolate.

Composers, poets, or painters who have lost their sense of beauty and truth, those whom vulgarity no longer shocks, who lack the strength even to follow up their own fugitive ideas, and whose only pleasure is to set traps under the feet of their active and flourishing rivals—such men are already dead and buried. And yet they believe themselves to be still alive; a happy illusion sustains them, they mistake exhaustion for fatigue, impotence for moderation. But compare this with the loss of an organ! Who could deceive himself about a loss of that magnitude? Especially when the loss is that of a voice that was marvelous in range and strength, in the beauty of its

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inflections, the nuances of its timbre, its dramatic expression, its perfect purity?

I have sometimes been moved to deepest pity for these unfortunate singers, and filled with a great indulgence for the whims, vanities, exactions, immoderate ambitions, exorbitant pretensions, and infinite absurdities of some of them. They live but a day, and die once for all. Hardly do the names of a few famous ones survive, and even those owe their rescue from oblivion to the fame of the composers whose interpreters they were, all too often unfaithful interpreters at that. We know of Caffarelli because he sang at Naples in Gluck's *Tito*. The memory of Mmes Saint-Huberty and Branchu has been kept in France because they created the roles of Dido, of the Vestal, of Iphigenia in Tauris,[1] and so on. Who among us would ever have heard of the *diva* Faustina were it not for Marcello, who was her teacher, and for Hasse, who married her? Let us therefore forgive these mortal gods for making their Olympus as brilliant as they can, for subjecting the heroes of art to such long and rugged trials, and for being inappeasable except by the sacrifice of ideas.

It is cruel for them to see the star of their fame and fortune sinking moment by moment below the horizon. What an anguishing celebration is that of their farewell appearance! How broken in heart must the great artist be when he last treads the boards and haunts the recesses of the theater of which he was for so long the tutelary spirit, the king, the absolute sovereign! Dressing in his room, he soliloquizes: "I shall never be here again; this helmet with its brilliant crest will adorn me no more; never again will this private receptacle open its lid to receive the perfumed notes of fair enthusiasts!"

A knock: it is the call-boy to announce the beginning of the piece. "Poor lad, no more trouble for you from my bad temper; no more abuse or cuffs to fear! Never again will you come to me and say: 'The overture has begun, sir. The curtain is up, sir! The first scene is over, sir! Your turn to go on, sir! They are waiting for you, sir!' Alas, no! It is I who now say to you: 'Santiquet, take off my name, which is still on the door; Santiquet, carry these flowers to Fanny; go at once, she won't care for them tomorrow; Santiquet, drink this glass of Madeira and take away the bottle; you shan't have to drive off the boys of the chorus in order to guard it; Santiquet, just make a parcel of these old wreaths, cart away my little piano, put out the lamp, lock the door; all is over.' "

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Under the load of these sad thoughts the virtuoso enters the wings. He meets the second tenor, his closest enemy, his understudy, who outwardly weeps heartily, but inwardly laughs luscious tears.

"And so my dear old chap," says the demigod in a doleful voice, "you're leaving us? But what a triumph is in store for you this evening! It is a great moment!"

"Yes, for you," replies the leading singer gloomily; and turning his back on him: "Delphine," he says to a pretty little dancer whom he has allowed to worship him, "give me my box of sweets."

"Oh, my box is empty," retorts the wanton creature, spinning on one foot, "I gave them all to Victor."

No matter. He must choke down grief, despair, fury; he must smile and sing. The tenor is on the stage; he is playing for the last time the work which he made a success, the part he *created.* He casts a final glance at the scenery which has reflected his glory, which has so often resounded with his tender accents, his passionate flights. He looks at the lake on whose shore he has waited for Mathilda, at the Grütli, from which he has shouted *Liberty!*—at the pale sun that for so many years he has seen rise at nine o'clock at night.[2]

He would like to cry, to sob his heart out; but he gets his cue, his voice must not tremble, the muscles of his face must express no other emotion than that of the part. The public is there—thousands of hands are prepared to applaud you, my poor old god: should they remain still, you would discover that the private sorrow you have just suffered and stifled is as nothing compared to the lacerating torture of the public's indifference on an occasion such as this. Once your slave, the public is today your master, your emperor. Now then, make your bow, there's the applause. . . . *Moriturus salutat.*

And so he sings, and by a superhuman effort recovers his youthful verve and voice; he arouses transports of enthusiasm beyond any yet seen; the stage is strewn with flowers like a hardly closed grave. His heart throbbing with a thousand conflicting emotions, he walks slowly off. The public wants to see him once more, and loudly calls for him. What sweet and cruel anguish there is for him in that final ovation! It is easy to forgive him for prolonging it a little. It is his last joy, his glory, his love, his genius, his life, shuddering as they die together.

Come, then, poor dear great artist, blazing meteor whose course is run, come forward and hear the ultimate voice of our affectionate

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admiration, as well as of our gratitude for the many pleasured moments you have given us; come and relish them, be happy and proud; you will always remember this hour, though we shall forget it tomorrow.

He comes forward gasping for breath, his heart swollen with tears. Loud cheers greet his appearance; the people clap their hands, call him the grandest, dearest names; Caesar crowns him. But the curtain comes down at last, like the cold weighted knife of the guillotine; a chasm yawns between the conqueror and his triumphal chariot, a chasm not to be bridged, a chasm hewed by the years. All is over! The god is no more!

Dark night . . .

Eternal night . . .

ENDNOTES

[1]In the operas, respectively, of Piccinni, Spontini, and Gluck

[2]These details refer to Rossini's *William Tell,* whose Paris première Berlioz witnessed in 1829.

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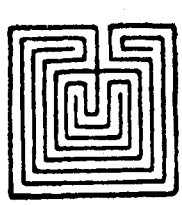

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